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THE AZTECS

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THE AZTECS

THEIR

HISTORY, MANNERS, AND CUSTOMS

From the French of

LUCIEN BIART

AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION

BY

J. L. GARNER

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TO

DOCTOR E.-T. HAMY,

THE LEARNED CURATOR

OF THE

Musée d'Ethnographie,

AN AFFECTIONATE TESTIMONIAL OF RESPECT.

LUCIEN BIART.

PREFACE.

WHILE modern Mexico and its inhabitants are to-day well known, Mexico of the past, the Mexico of the Aztecs, is almost ignored. Educated people have a vague idea that in 1519 the Spaniards found on the new continent a vast civilized empire, governed by a ruler named Montezuma, whom they dethroned. Beyond this they know nothing.

Having contributed toward extending a knowledge of the Mexico of the present, I intend to depict (the task is not, I think, too ambitious) the country as it was when conquered by the Spaniards. Availing myself of the observations of those who saw it in its splendor, — Cortez, Bernal Diaz, Ojéda, the anonymous Conqueror, and of the later works of Tezozomoc, Duran, Acosta, Gomara, Olmos, Herréra, Sahagun, Torquemada, Clavigéro, Ramirez, Orozco, etc., — I shall attempt to re-clothe with life a people whose

descendants, oppressed by the sons of their ancient conquerors, have themselves forgotten, not only their history, but even their name.

Although special scholars may find a résumé of their studies and possibly some new facts in the work, it was undertaken principally for readers unfamiliar with the history of the primitive peoples of America. I might have repeated the names of my authorities in foot-notes as they occurred (especially the names of Tezozomoc, Sahagun, Torquemada, Clavigéro, and Orozco, writers whose works, excepting those of the two first, have not been translated into French); but numerous notes render the simply curious reader impatient, and students of American history are familiar with the sources to which I have been compelled to resort; consequently I believed it useless to refer to them repeatedly. However, as Acosta has been accused (and not without reason, it is true) of having tranquilly copied Duran and Tezozomoc, who in turn had copied the anonymous author of the manuscript known as the "Codex Ramirez," and as Torquemada has been charged with having received his inspiration from Sahagun, and Clavigéro with having

adopted Torquemada as his model, I am anxious to forestall all accusation of this sort.

I therefore confess to my readers that I was compelled — a necessity which historians cannot escape — to imitate, amplify, reduce, commentate, translate, and remould such passages in the writings of the fathers in the history of New Spain as might aid me in my undertaking, in order to add them to what I myself saw or discovered. I might have invented, it is true; for no subject furnishes a better field than does history for the play of the imagination. But I have not done so, — recalling the fact that one of the kings of the Colhuas decreed that inaccurate historians should be punished with death.

NOTE. — The translator is under obligations to Mr. J. J. LALOR, editor of the "Cyclopædia of Political Science," for careful help in revision.

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THE AZTECS.

CHAPTER I.

ANAHUAC, OR MEXICO. — ITS SITUATION AND GEOGRAPHICAL DIVISIONS. — ASPECT AND PRODUCTIONS OF ITS DIFFERENT ZONES. — THE CORDILLERAS. — LAKES, RIVERS, STREAMS. — FROM THE ATLANTIC TO THE PACIFIC.

THE vast country which we call Mexico, from one of the two names borne by the Aztec or Mexican nation who occupied it when it was conquered by the Spaniards, was then called Anahuac, — a Toltec word, which means "situated near the water." This name, which at first was applied only to the Valley of Mexico, on account of its lakes, was in time extended to all the territory included between the 16th and the 38th degree of north latitude, — a country which, baptized anew by Hernando Cortez, afterward became known as New Spain.

Owing to its geographical situation, and above all to the chain of mountains which extends from one extremity of it to the other, Anahuac possesses almost every climate. Hence at an early

date its inhabitants divided it into three principal regions, — the Warm Lands, the Temperate Lands, and the Cold Lands. The Warm Lands, which extend along the coast of the two great oceans, the Atlantic and Pacific, comprise all the country with an elevation not greater than one thousand feet above the sea-level. Of unimaginable fertility, in part covered with venerable forests, the Warm Lands supply commerce with logwood, mahogany, cedar, cochineal, indigo, sugar, cotton, cocoanuts, vanilla, tortoise-shell, pearls, etc. Unfortunately, the yellow fever, or *vomito negro*, — a disease apparently unknown to the ancient inhabitants, and which attacks foreigners only, — prevails here. This scourge rages only during the great heat of summer. From the month of October to the month of March it is driven from the Atlantic coast by the violent winds from the north, which fortnightly carry icy currents of air from Hudson's Bay as far as the parallel of Vera Cruz. The average temperature of the Warm Lands is 79 degrees Fahrenheit; in the sun, it exceeds 113 degrees.

Above this region, on the first plateau of the Cordilleras, an eternal spring prevails. At this height, four thousand feet above the level of the sea, extreme heat and extreme cold are equally rare; here the rays of the sun are mild, the wind is a lukewarm breath. This is the region known as the Temperate Lands; and the thermometer

here remains between 68 and 70 degrees. The sugar-cane ripens in the valleys; and the vegetation, more varied but not less vigorous than on the coast, is a subject of admiration the year round. Orizava, Córdova, Jalapa, — veritable Mexican paradises, — are situated on these picturesque steps, and are renowned for their healthful climate. However, the elevation of these cities is the same as that of the clouds; hence, when the formidable north wind blows over the Warm Lands, lifting up the waves of the sea, uprooting the trees, sweeping away the miasma, disturbing the usual serenity of the sky, the Temperate Lands are plunged in the semi-darkness of a moist, moving fog.

The third zone — the Cold Lands — comprises the plateaus, elevated more than 7,200 feet above the ocean-level, and on which the mean temperature is 63 degrees. This figure shows that the terms Cold Lands, Temperate Lands, and Warm Lands have an absolute value only for the inhabitants of the country. A European finds a temperature of 68 degrees warm, and he would not call one of 63 cold. Such, however, is the temperature of the city of Mexico. Upon the plateaus which overlook that city, even though they are situated under the tropics, the climate is severe and disagreeable; for the air, being very rare there, is not easily heated.

In Europe, as Baron von Humboldt justly remarked, the agricultural products of a country

almost always depend on its latitude. In Mexico, it is the greater or less elevation above the sea-level that determines the climate and productions of a district. Thus, at the 20th degree the sugar-cane, the indigo-plant, and the cocoa-tree cease to grow above an elevation of 2,600 feet; and wheat begins to ripen only at a height of 4,550, and it cannot be produced above an elevation of 9,750 feet.

The chain of mountains whose summits form the vast central plateau of Mexico is the same that extends through South America under the name of the Andes. However, it differs greatly from it in arrangement, composition, and aspect. The Mexican Cordilleras have few abrupt breaks. The principal plateau is so even that carriages can move on it without great difficulty, over a road almost three hundred and fifty miles in length, on which little engineering work has been necessary. From Mexico to Acapulco, — that is, in the direction of the Pacific Ocean, — the slope is almost imperceptible. Towards the north, in the direction of Chihuahua, the plateaus — which seem to be the beds of ancient lakes — form a series of steps scarcely separated from one another by hills. These plateaus, a thousand feet above the level of the sea, — whose declivity is so gentle that it is almost imperceptible to the traveller who crosses them, — are among the most interesting geological curiosities of New Spain.

But on the other hand, from Mexico to Vera Cruz, — whether one takes the way of Jalapa, of Orizava, or the intermediate railway route, — the declivities are rapid and abrupt. This route affords the finest view of the imposing beauty of the Cordilleras, whose forest-covered summits are over-towered by a group of extinct, or at least slumbering volcanos. The largest of these is [1]Popocatepetl ("smoking mountain"), 17,687 feet high. Next comes [2]Citlatepetl ("mountain of the star"), better known as the Peak of Orizava, 17,664 feet in height; then [3]Iztacihuatl ("white woman"), 15,7[6]14 feet above the level of the sea; and finally, Nauhcampatapetl ("square rock"), of an elevation of 13,415 feet, the only one which is not covered with snow the year round, and which, because of its peculiar form, the Spaniards have named "Péroté's Chest."

[5]Towards Guanajuato the Cordilleras take the name of Sierra Madre, and are divided into three great branches. In this region the richest silver mines known are found, among others the famous Valenciana, which has yielded its fortunate owner an income of as high as $6,000,000 a year.

Despite its ancient name of Anahuac, the central plateau of Mexico is wanting in water-courses; hence it is in part devoid of vegetation. Many causes concur to produce this result. In the first place the height of the Cordilleras sensibly increases the evaporation that takes place on the plateaus, and on the other hand

the country is not sufficiently high for many of its peaks to reach the zone of perpetual snow. In addition to this, springs are necessarily rare in mountains composed of porous amygdoloids and porphyry. The rain-water, instead of gathering in subterranean basins, is lost in clefts of volcanic origin, and reappears only at the foot of the Cordilleras. Numerous small streams, indeed, furrow its sides; but owing to the configuration of the country they are not very long, and they flow rapidly to the sea, in which they are lost.

In the centre of Mexico are no rivers. The largest of those that water its territory, the Rio Bravo del Norte, has separated it from the United States since the Mexican war, and only half belongs to it. The Rio Bravo, after a course of 1,240 miles, empties into the Gulf of Mexico. Above it the Rio Colorado ("red river") flows into the Gulf of California. But this river, whose length is 800 miles, has belonged to the American Republic since 1849.

Towards the south flows the Papaloapam, which the Spaniards called the Rio d'Alvarado, in memory of a lieutenant of Cortez who first ascended its course. The Papaloapam has its source in the mountains of Miztec, and after uniting with the Rio Blanco in the immense Bay of Alvarado, empties into the Gulf of Mexico.

The Goazocoalco, which Cortez, anticipating M. de Lesseps, thought of connecting with the

Rio Paso, with the Chimalpa or with the Tehuantepec, to establish a communication between the two great oceans, descends from the Mixes Mountains and empties below the town of Minatitlan. Finally, the Chiapan, or Rio de Tabasco, ends near the port to which it has given its name, and mingles its waters with those of the Usumacinta.

The great lakes, which in the absence of navigable streams served to develop the home trade of the first inhabitants of Anahuac, are now drying up. Among the most important, we must mention that of Tezcoco, in the centre of which the city of Mexico was founded, and which communicates with the Lake of Chalco by a long natural canal. In the north, Lake Chapala covers an area of 1,350 square miles; this lake seems never to have belonged to the Aztecs. We may also mention the Lake of Catemaco, in the Sierra de San Andres Tuxtla, the most picturesque perhaps of the known lakes.

Springs, torrents, streams, small rivers, are rare in the plains, as well as in the Cordilleras, and their waters frequently contain copper, soda, lime, and carbonic acid. Warm waters abound, at times carrying petroleum oils with them. As a matter of curiosity the Rio de las Vueltas ("the winding river") deserves mention; in the course of less than thirty miles it crosses the road from Tehuacan to Oajaca about sixty times.

Without its periodic rains, which, especially in the Warm Lands, serve to determine the seasons, Mexico would in part be sterile. But storms, frequent on the coast and on the plateaus, and of daily occurrence in the Temperate Lands, refresh the atmosphere and swell the torrents and rivers, which, having no embankments whatever, overflow and cover the surrounding country, to a distance of more than sixty miles, with yellowish waters. The storms of Mexico, as well known as its annual earthquakes, begin in June and end in October. The spectacle is at once terrible, grand, and impressive. The heavens are clear, the atmosphere stifling, an enervating calm lulls all animated nature to sleep, — a calm which it seems nothing could disturb. Suddenly the top of a steel-gray cloud rises above the horizon, on the Atlantic side, and grows perceptibly larger and larger. Intermittent gusts of wind sweep the earth, raise columns of dust, scatter it in the upper region of the atmosphere, and veil the brilliancy of the sun. The violence of the blast increases, the leaves are twisted about, the branches of the trees bend and crash. The frightened birds, uttering plaintive cries, fly with quickly beating wings in all directions, while the quadrupeds bray, roar, neigh, bend their heads, scrape the ground with their feet, and man grows anxious. The sky becomes black, it is dusk before its time; then all noises, except those caused by the wind, are suddenly hushed. A

lightning flash bursts forth from the dark cloud, that is almost within reach of the hand, with a noise like that made by the rending of an immense sail; the rain immediately pours down in torrents. The flashes of lightning now follow without interruption, blinding the eyes with their white flames, and the earth trembles under the repeated claps of thunder, whose rumbling the mountain echo reverberates and multiplies. For an hour Nature, battling with the elements, seems destined to annihilation in a furious and blind struggle which threatens a flood. Streams of yellow, red, or black water, according to the nature of the soil through which it flows, descend from the high peaks with a roaring sound, their courses cross, they unite with one another and are transformed into torrents. Vegetation is swept away, trees uprooted, and rocks, rolled along as if of no weight, bound with a crash on the slopes and are precipitated to the bottom of valleys and into the depths of unfathomed gorges. From these abysses, which the water seems anxious to fill up, and which are inhabited by beings that love the darkness, ascend clamors, wild cries, and hisses. During these sinister moments the earth, overpowered by the angry heavens, seems to writhe and tremble in terrible agony under the increasing blows dealt it by the furious elements.

At last the immense cloud loses its inky color and assumes grayish tints. The wind dies out,

the noises cease, day reappears, then the sun. Suddenly the birds sing, the insects buzz, and the vultures, darting up into the laved atmosphere, describe their mysterious circles. We breathe; a healthy odor rises from the soil, and the fragrant flowers exhale sweet perfumes. It seems like a dream; but the morrow will bring the same phenomena, the same struggles, the same terrors, and the same feeling of inanity.

To resume. The European who follows the road traced out by the Spaniards to reach the capital of Mexico soon gets a general idea of the different climates of the beautiful country he is about to visit. Thirty leagues out to sea, when crossing the transparent waves of the Gulf Stream, his eyes have discovered the sharp, snow-covered cone of the Peak of Orizava, and the giant, whose summit grazes the horizon, seems to grow larger as the vessel approaches the shore. He lands and is deceived. He expected to meet with palm-trees, cocoanut-trees, lemon-trees, the boasted flora of the tropics, and instead he finds himself face to face with a sandy coast on which the cactus grows, and on which serpents crawl or iguanas run. In the distance, towards the west, the grand Cordilleras stand out darkly against the vermilion sky, and look like a mass of storm-clouds. Vultures in search of unclean prey hover in the atmosphere at an immense height, while brown pelicans skim over the ground, above which bluish vapors are floating. He feels sad,

disenchanted. The atmosphere is impregnated with a strange musky odor; he is treading the land of malarial fevers and of the mysterious black vomit. The sand line passed, the country gradually changes. He crosses a region of underbrush, then vast plains, in which horses and horned cattle, brought from the old country long ago, graze and multiply in freedom. Mimosa bushes, alive with cardinal birds with purple plumage, chattering parrots, and blue sparrows, tell him that he is not far from a forest. At last he sees palms and cocoanut-trees. Aras please the eye with their splendid dress, and offend the ear with their discordant voices. He passes by a marsh or river; alligators, tapirs, bears, otters, and turtles flee before him. At intervals, monkeys, ant-eaters, wild-cats and sloths surprise him by their forms, their movements, and by their cries, which are answered by the doleful howls of prairie-wolves, the roaring of jaguars or pumas, these maneless lions. Eagles and golden-crested king-vultures hover in the sky; lower down float humming-birds, a hundred different species of harmonious-voiced sparrows, azure-colored pigeons, pink and white spoon-bills. Trees with strange foliage bear unknown fruit. On their trunks, the stem of the vanilla traces its zigzags, laden with emerald-covered pods, which on drying become brown and odorous.

Thus far the traveller has met with only mulattoes, the descendants of negroes formerly brought

from Africa to cultivate the burning soil he walks upon. All at once a bamboo cabin, surrounded by sharp-leaved yucas, and shaded by banana-trees, appears on the edge of a stream. A man of medium height, with a copper-colored skin, a flat nose, a gentle look, coarse, thick hair, and beardless chin stands at the threshold. Children of both sexes, entirely naked, their stomachs distended, run and hide behind a woman occupied in grinding maize on a block of lava, and whose rather gross body is covered only by a petticoat scarcely reaching to the knees. You look with surprise at these Indians, descendants of the powerful race, whom Cortez conquered, and who, though humble and timid, have, for the last three centuries, obstinately repelled everything of European origin.

But the traveller is approaching the Cordilleras, and that gigantic wall, ten thousand feet in height, strikes the mind, overwhelms it, disquiets it. He asks himself how that mighty obstacle, whose rounded summits are covered with verdure can be passed. He begins to climb, and he looks back. The country he has just crossed, panting, bathed in sweat, harassed by insects greedy for blood, and which is now unrolled at his feet, is the Warm Land.

Again he begins to ascend slowly, with a feeling of terror, skirting dark precipices, at the bottom of which roll noisy torrents that awaken numerous echoes. He frequently stops to take

breath, to look at a cascade, gigantic rocks, or trees the trunk of any one of which several men holding each other's hands would scarcely be able to surround. Other plants surprise the observer by the strangeness of their forms; many-colored birds fly about and twitter in their branches, which are adorned with clinging vines. Orchids display their singular flowers everywhere; your feet become entangled in crawling roots of sarsaparilla and jalap; parrots fly by you chattering. Armadillos, opossums, martens, porcupines, flee in fright; squirrels spring from one tree to another as if they had wings. A serpent raises his head, darts forth his forked tongue, casts his evil eye upon you, and then disappears in the grass, in which you hear the noise of the rattle-snake, and where no one dares to tread.

The traveller crosses gorges and torrents, and ascends without intermission; the vegetation changes at every step. Clouds of large yellow, blue, or red butterflies are met with all along the route, which is crossed by toucans with enormous beaks, and small black snakes. You breathe easier; the air is more moist. On all sides are orange-trees, lemon-trees, and cocoanut-trees; you are in the Temperate Land.

Suddenly, after a last summit, an immense plain spreads out before you. The soil becomes white and dusty; aloes and agaves, which can live without water, abound. The traveller is eight thousand feet above the level of the sea, on the

central plateau, and the air is so rarefied that the least physical effort deprives one of breath. In the background the three great volcanos lift their snowy peaks. The country is healthy, its sky is of an azure blue, its fields are fertile. Red-pepper plants have taken the place of the cedar, the cypress, and the orange. Unless you go in a northern direction, — that is, towards the so-called *interior lands*, which so forcibly recall the desolate plains of Castile, — you go through a veritable garden. Towards the right the silhouette of the mountains of Guanajuato is outlined on the sky, and towards the left that of the Miztec mountains. The ancient valley of Anahuac crossed, the traveller leaves the Cold Lands, to again find, on the shore of the Pacific, the climate, the vegetation, and the fauna of the Warm Lands, and of the Temperate Lands.

CHAPTER II.

First Inhabitants of Mexico. — The Giants. — The Tarascos. — The Toltecs. — The Otomites. — The Chichimecs. — The Alcolhuas. — The Tlaxcaltecs. — Appearance of the Nahuan Tribes, or Nahuatlacs.

At the time of the discovery of the shores of Anahuac by Grijalva, in 1518, the beautiful country of whose physiognomy we have just given a general outline was divided into four kingdoms, three aristocratic republics, and a multitude of small states. Mexico was the principal of the four kingdoms; then came Colhuacan, Tlacopan, and Michoacan, the three together of less extent than the powerful neighbor on whom they depended. The three republics were Tlaxcala, — whose citizens, for centuries enemies of the Aztecs, made common cause with Cortez, — Cholula, and Huexotzinco. The peninsula of Yucatan, of which we shall have something to say, was then an independent monarchy.

The history of the first peoples established in Anahuac is so obscure, so full of fables hard to co-ordinate, that the hope of ever knowing it with certainty must be abandoned. In the New World, as well as in the Old, men have lost the sources of their origin, or have veiled them with

the marvellous, so easily born of the imagination. Thus, on the arrival of the Spaniards in America, all the Indian races with whom they came in contact claimed that they were the descendants of a race of giants. In support of this assertion they exhibited enormous bones found embedded in the earth. The conquerors themselves, digging the ground to open roads or to build churches, soon brought to light some of these fossil remains, which at first sight appeared to them to have belonged to human beings. The missionaries, mindful of the words of Genesis, *Gigantes erant super terram in diebus illis*, accepted with a blind faith the traditions that confirmed the truth of the Bible. The belief that Mexico was primitively peopled by giants was so strongly impressed on the mind of the people that on my arrival in the country, in May, 1845, teeth of a mastodon recently exhumed from the bed of the Tuspango River in the province of Vera Cruz, were shown to me as an irrefutable proof of the fact. It is not strange, however, that the Indians should be mistaken in regard to the origin of the fossil remains of animals whose existence was unknown to them. Did not the Old World believe in Cyclops and Titans before paleontology became a science?

Was man in Mexico the contemporary of great proboscidians, of whom he at first regarded himself as the descendant? "All that can be affirmed," writes Dr. Hamy, in his great work

entitled "Zoölogie du Mexique", "is that a man whose anthropologic characteristics are still undetermined lived before the final geologic events which gave America its actual formation, and that, in Mexico in particular, man was the contemporary of the gigantic animals whose destruction, according to the native writings, was completed by the Olmecs."

It is worthy of remark, in fact, that, in the Aztec legends, the Olmecs — and this is all we know about them — are represented as having destroyed the giants who had occupied a part of Anahuac since the creation of the world.

But let us leave the darkness and the fables whose allegories, grown incomprehensible, conceal from the man of modern times, ever eager for accuracy, his true origin. The most ancient people of whom traces are found in any part of modern Mexico, are the Mayas who inhabited Yucatan.

The Mayas, whom many writers have endeavored to connect with the Toltecs, are completely separated from them by their language. Nevertheless, as the influence of their civilization made itself felt, both politically and religiously, upon the continent whose great peninsula they occupied, they ought not to be passed over in silence. According to their traditions the country in which they had their origin was called Tulapam, and it was about the year 793 before the Christian era that they appeared in Yucatan. They

must have come by sea, for the resemblance of their language to that spoken by the aborigines of Cuba, Hayti, and Jamaica reveals an undoubted relationship between these different peoples. This emigration, moreover, proves that at this remote epoch, the people of the Antilles were already far advanced in civilization, since they could cross the waters of the Gulf of Mexico in numbers.

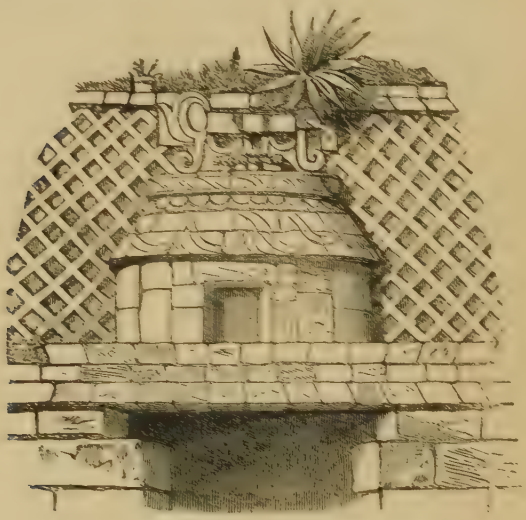


FIG. 1. — PART OF A RUIN IN UXMAL.

The emigrants to Yucatan, led by a chief named Iztamna, at once priest, sovereign, physician, and prophet, founded the city of Iztamal ("dew of heaven"). Among the successors of Iztamna we find the name of Votan, civilizer of the province of Chiapas. Iztamna had come

from the Atlantic, and everything favors the supposition that Votan, likewise sovereign, priest, and legislator, came from the shores of the Pacific Ocean. He played the part of a Buddha in the centre of America.

Although the magnificent ruins, which to-day cover the country formerly occupied by the Mayas, present the same architectural character, and although they have the same hieroglyphic inscrip-

Fig. 2. — Pyramid of Mayapan.

tions, they certainly do not belong to the same epoch, nor are they the work of the same generation. The ruins of Iztamal, with their pyramids, those of Uxmal, which Orozco represents as a product of the golden age of Maya art, and of whose decoration we give a specimen (fig. 1), and finally the monuments of the decadence of Mayapan, mark three very distinct periods (fig. 2).

In this division the group of the Mayas of Chiapas is represented by the ruins of Palenque, of Ococingo, of Chichen-Itza, and of Lorillard-City, — that dead town of the country of the Lacandons, recently discovered by M. Désiré Charnay.

I have frequently studied the ruins just mentioned, with the hope of grasping their distinctive character, or in default of that, of discovering a salient feature which might enable me to classify them with certainty. Vain endeavor; no such character and no such feature exists. The competent men whom I questioned, far from being able to help me, confessed that they shared my embarrassment. Hence it is only by the nature of certain ornaments, and by the quality of the materials employed, and not by great lines of demarcation, that the different ages of the architecture of the nations who at first peopled the provinces of Chiapas can be distinguished. Nevertheless, it seems beyond all doubt that these monuments are the work of one race, executed in different ages, and obeying identical traditions of art and civilization.

How many times, pursuing a bird or an insect through the forests that now cover the fields which the Mayas once tilled, has chance brought me unexpectedly face to face with one of the buildings erected by that mysterious people! How many melancholy hours have I passed wandering around these ruins, contemplating these crumbling walls, these magnificent works of men,

whose name and history are scarcely known to the modern world! And yet these chiselled stones, covered with odd, fantastic designs, fanciful in appearance, on which plants and flowers surround warriors posing proudly or kneeling in the humble attitude of vanquished men, tell the facts of centuries that have passed. These bas-reliefs are documents, these palaces books of granite! Vanity! the man who ordered that these walls should be built, that his name and his mighty deeds should be inscribed on every stone, must have believed himself immortal. And lo! to-day wandering travellers, belonging to a race of men whose existence he did not even dream of, puzzled, contemplate his gigantic work, which spoke long years ago, but which is now dumb.

Dumb? No! The venerable trees, which hide in their shade these palaces that were once bathed by the sun, conceal nests in their branches. There melodious sparrows sing, morning and evening, the hymn which was familiar to their ancestors in the time of Iztamna. At night a wildcat or a jaguar comes forth from these ruins and growls; while owls, that think these palaces built for them, hover, with noiseless wing, over the fire lighted by the traveller. The flickering flame seems to give life to the warriors drawn up in battle array, and to revive for an instant those heroes who, having long listened to the ceaseless noises of a great city, are at last enveloped in oblivion. Now, their eyes ever open,

resting on a sceptre or brandishing a sword, they listen to the silence of the solitude which surrounds them, and after twenty centuries, again see pass at their feet the puny being of whom they are at once the work and the image.

Leaving the Mayas, we must mention among the first colonizers of Anahuac the inhabitants of the kingdom of Michoacan, the Tarascos. This people belonged only by their civilization to the famous tribes of the Nahuas, of whom we shall soon speak, and their language had no relationship with that of their neighbors, the Colhuas and the Aztecs. The Toltec nation is the first in regard to which, the traditions of the people who occupied Anahuac at the time of the arrival of the Spaniards, give us any positive information. Exiled, according to their own account, from their native country, the kingdom of Tollan, which seems to have been in the vicinity of Lake Tulare, the Toltecs directed their course towards the south. Caprice or necessity compelled them to stop for some time at many points which still preserve traces of their passage; for wherever they sojourned they erected buildings. They took one hundred and twenty-four years to reach the place they named Tollantzinco, where they thought of establishing themselves definitively. About twenty years later they resumed their journey and stopped near a river on the bank of which, about the year 667 of our era, they founded a city which they called Tollan or Tula,

in memory of their native country. Tollan, the most ancient city of Anahuac, was about twenty-five miles from Mexico, and it is often mentioned in the Aztec annals.

The Toltecs, from this period, lived under a monarchial form of government. Far advanced in civilization, they busied themselves not only with agriculture and commerce, but also with science, art, and manufactures, and their name, among the people who succeeded them, became the synonyme for "skilled workman." To them Anahuac owes the cultivation of Indian corn, discovered by a great man, deified after his death or mysterious disappearance, Quetzacoatl. Cotton, allspice, sage, and other useful plants are also supposed to have been discovered by the Toltecs. But their chief title to glory, even in the eyes of Europeans, has for a long time, been their calendar.

As a matter of fact, this calendar is the work of the Mayas, from whom Quetzacoatl borrowed it at the time of his excursion into Yucatan. It has given rise to long and learned discussions, in which we shall take care not to lose ourselves. In the first place, being a lunar calendar, it presents the principles of both the Egyptian and the Asiatic calendars. Must we conclude from this, as many historians have done, that Yucatan and the province of Chiapas were at some remote period in accidental contact with the peoples of Asia and of Europe? The fact is possible,

although very improbable. Would it not be strange, indeed, that this contact should have no palpable result but that of the exact knowledge of the divisions of time? Omitting for the time being all discussion, let us content ourselves with recalling that the Maya calendar, which all the peoples of Anahuac adopted, modifying the names of the months and days according to their language, was improved by the Toltecs and perfected by the Aztecs. It constituted the age or cycle of fifty-two years, and divided the year, which began on the second day of February, into eighteen months of twenty days each. To these months, to complete the number of three hundred and sixty-five days, five days, set aside for rest, were added.

Settled in a temperate climate, and on a fertile soil, the Toltec people rapidly prospered, founded numerous cities, and civilized some of the barbarous tribes that surrounded them. During the reign of their eighth king, Topiltzin, several years of drought and an invasion of locusts destroyed their crops. To the famine which resulted from these calamities, a war with the Xalixenses was soon added. Topiltzin, conquered, took refuge in a cave, and was supposed to be dead. Ruined and decimated, part of his subjects emigrated. Some went to Yucatan, others to Guatemala, where their descendants still speak their language. The monuments attributed to these people — but attributed to them falsely — are the

famous sanctuaries of Teotihuacan, of Cholula, and of the strong city of Cuauhnahuac.

The departure of the Toltecs left Anahuac almost deserted for many years. However, we must mention as then occupying some of its districts, the Olmecs and the Xicalancs, against whom they had had to struggle on their arrival, and who are thought to have been but one and the same nation. At all events, they had had for neighbors the Otomites,[1] who gave up barbarism only about the fifteenth century, under the impulse of the Alcolhuas. The Otomites inhabited caverns and lived by the chase. They were rude men, whom the Aztecs succeeded in conquering and controlling. After the death of Moteuczoma II. the Otomites recovered their independence, and the Spaniards had to struggle with them for more than a century before subduing them.

The Chichimecs ("blood suckers"), according to the etymology of Torquemada, but who designated themselves the *eagles*, succeeded the Toltecs, who belonged to the same race. This people also came from the regions of the North, which in America as in Europe seem to have been nurseries of men. The Chichimecs, less civilized than their predecessors, were like them governed by kings. They were ignorant of agriculture; they lived on fruits, roots, and the

[1] Prescott gives this name as Otomies, Bancroft as Ottomies, and other authorities spell it Otomis. — Tr.

products of the chase, and clothed themselves in skins simply dried.

We already possess more certain information regarding the Chichimecs than concerning the Toltecs. According to their traditions the king of Amaquemecan had two sons, Achcautzin and Xolotl, to whom he gave the government of his empire. Xolotl, wishing to reign alone, went towards the south, taking with him those of his subjects who consented to cast their fortunes with his. The emigrants followed in the track of the Toltecs and reached the ruins of Tollan; continuing their journey they drew near the lake of Tezcoco. There, shooting an arrow towards the four cardinal points, they thus took possession of the beautiful valley of Anahuac, and founded the city of Tenayuca.

Around Chapultepec ("mount of locusts"), — a place which became celebrated for the castle which the Spanish viceroys afterwards built there, and under the gigantic cypresses of which the unfortunate Maximilian loved to rest, — the Chichimecs found some descendants of the Toltecs to whom they allied themselves. Nopalitzin, son of Xolotl, even married a grand-daughter of the ancient kings of that nation. This alliance was of advantage for the emigrants, who then learned to cultivate the soil, to spin cotton and the fibre of the agave, and to work the metals.

Shortly after their settlement the Chichimecs saw new tribes of their nation, among others the

Alcolhuas, appear. The new-comers, however, more civilized than those who had preceded them, were well received, and lands were granted them. The Alcolhuas now seconded the Toltecs in their efforts to soften the customs of the Chichimecs, and they succeeded so well that, a century after their arrival, they were morally masters of the country. Every one then boasted of being an Alcolhua, and the name of Chichimec was even now applied only to the inhabitants of the frontiers who rebelled against civilization.

The details of this rapid and singular transformation are not known; but everything goes to show that it was accomplished peaceably. New reinforcements came continually to the Alcolhuas, and they were always welcome. All these emigrants belonged to the great family of the Nahuatlacs ("people who speak clearly"), and they submitted or allied themselves without difficulty to the Alcolhuas, who had the same origin as themselves. First came the Xochimilcos ("sowers of flowers") who settled on the borders of the lake to which they gave their name. The Chalcas ("men of mouth") followed close upon them, preceding the Tepanecs ("passers of bridges") and the Colhuas ("men of the curved mountain"). The Tlahuicos ("men turned towards the earth"), finding the valley peopled, directed their course towards the western mountains, crossed them, and descended into the valley of Quauhanahuac.

A little later the Tlaxcaltecs ("bread eaters") appeared. They spoke the language of the Alcolhuas, from whom they were distinguished only by their warlike disposition. They wandered for a long time in the valley, unable to settle there, for the peoples united to drive out these quarrelsome neighbors. At last, protected by a Chichimec king, the Tlaxcaltecs overcame those who wished them ill. They founded at the foot of Mount Matlacuye, in the sierra now called *de la Malinche*, Tlaxcala, the implacable rival of Mexico.

Brave, intelligent, and industrious, the Tlaxcaltecs obeyed one king for a long time. When their number increased they divided the country which they occupied into four sections, each provided with a chief, who had the members of the nobility as his advisers. The four chiefs and their senates decided in common not only all questions of peace or war, but everything that pertained to the army and its command. The aristocratic republic of Tlaxcala, from hatred of the Aztecs, with whom they were then at war, entered into an alliance with the Spaniards the moment they appeared, and furnished Cortez with the soldiers he needed to conquer Moteuczoma II. The Tlaxcaltecs had the satisfaction of seeing the fall of their rivals, but they soon shared their servitude; for Cortez, victorious, forgot the services his allies had rendered him.

We have rapidly enumerated the different

nations which, from the earlier ages up to the year 1160 of our era, occupied the country of Anahuac, leaving some trace in its history. Several other peoples, whom we have omitted to mention, are scarcely known except by their quarrels with their more powerful or more civilized neighbors. In the chronologic order we would have to place first the ancient Otomites, or Ontocas, from whom sprung the Mazahuas and the Jonaces or Meques. Afterwards came the Mayas and their tribes, — Miztecs and Zapotecs, who found the Chuchones on the land on which they established themselves. Of the sub-tribes, Cuitlacs, Chatinos, Papatucos, Omuchcos, Mazatecs, Soltecs, and Chinantecs, scattered among peoples of different origins, scarcely anything is known but their name.

But we are gradually reaching the period in which the Aztecs appeared, and whom we shall henceforth follow step by step.

CHAPTER III.

THE AZTECS, OR MEXICANS. — THEIR FATHERLAND. — THEIR PEREGRINATIONS. — FOUNDATION OF TENOCHTITLAN. — POLITICAL STATE OF ANAHUAC IN 1357. — THE CALENDAR.

NEARLY twenty years ago, an American exhibited under the name of Aztecs, in Paris and London, two little microcephalous creatures, zambos of Central America, who subsequently became one of the curiosities of Barnum's Museum in New York. The name of Aztec, previously unknown or nearly so to our great public, immediately became in their expressive language a synonyme for Liliputian. Unfortunately, nothing is farther from the truth than such a belief, as we may judge from the physical and moral picture of that intelligent race which it seems indispensable we should paint before taking up their history.

The Aztec, as he was formerly called, — the Indian, as he is now called in consequence of the mistake of Columbus, who believed he was approaching the Indies when he discovered America, — is of medium height, thick-set, and has well proportioned limbs. Dolichocephalous, he has a narrow forehead, a flat nose, black eyes,

a large mouth, thick purple lips, white, short regular teeth, well set in rose-colored gums. His hair is black, thick, and coarse; his beard is scanty. His skin is of a dull copper-color, lighter on the palms of the hands and on the soles of

FIG. 3.—INDIAN MAN AND WOMAN OF THE VILLAGE OF AMATLAN (FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY DR. FUZIER).

the feet. The men of this race are, according to our æsthetic ideas, ugly rather than handsome. The women, whose features are more delicate, are often pretty at the time of puberty; but their forms soon become heavy. The two sexes have

one common characteristic, — the smallness of the extremities. It is worthy of remark that, unlike the Toltecs, these people did not deform their skull intentionally (fig. 3).

The senses of the Aztec are very acute, — especially that of sight, which he preserves in all its power up to a very advanced age. He never becomes obese, rarely loses his teeth or hair, and the latter turns gray only in exceptional cases. His gesticulations are awkward, and rather slow. His fingers, owing doubtless to the agricultural labor in which he is engaged, are wanting in dexterity. Temperate in eating, the Aztec is fond of fermented liquors. The severity with which the ancient laws of his country punished drunkenness seems to show that he had a leaning towards this vice.

Like other men, the Aztecs are a prey to the passions; they are able, however, to control them with an uncommon force of will. Anger, love, and jealousy may trouble them, but these passions rarely make them commit the extravagances so common among Europeans.

Grave and taciturn, the Aztec is wanting in energy; and his impassibility sometimes borders on indifference. He is brave and patient, and he supports physical pain with a stoicism that has often been admired. His wife, laborious, tender, and devoted, possesses the maternal instinct in a high state of development; intellectually, she is equal if not superior to her husband.

The prejudice of the Spaniards has done much to belittle the Aztecs, whom for a long time they called *beings without reason.* It is now a demonstrated fact that these pariahs are capable of understanding all the sciences, and of exercising all the arts, and that the ignorance in which their conquerors have systematically kept them has been the sole cause for their apparent inferiority. However, these conquered people now seem to be awakening from their long apathy, — to be recovering their energy and the spirit of initiative which formerly made them a great nation. By degrees they are beginning to occupy all the important positions of their country, — becoming presidents, generals, ministers, magistrates, engineers, physicians, even painters and sculptors. Strange phenomenon! they are beginning to dominate morally the Spanish society that so long repulsed them, and did scarcely anything but oppress them.

Whether it be the effect of prejudice, or that we are unaccustomed to the sight, the Aztec in a European costume — even when he has worn it from childhood — has an awkward appearance. Our hat is not in keeping with his features, and our clothes do not sit well on his form, nor are they suited to his actions. At the same time, the scantiness of his national costume, which leaves him half-naked, and which the masses of the Aztecs are unwilling to give up, is inadmissible in our civilization. It is to be regretted that,

like the Hindoo, whose name has been improperly given to the Aztec, he did not wear long, flowing garments.

Seen in the forests of his own country, in the environment of sombre green, — with which the color of his skin harmonizes so well, — no longer hampered by cravat, waistcoat, or shoes, the Aztec presents a fine appearance. There is nothing more charming than to see his daughters, before their forms have become too full, running, indolent and graceful, under the beautiful blue sky of their native land. The uniform civilization which is levelling our globe at the present time will certainly injure all the colored races, which, however, instinctively resist this levelling. The Aztec is at this moment reviving his individuality. This is an undeniable fact; but will they ever rise again as a nation? This is a great problem, which the future alone can solve; and we have only to do with the past.

There is in the Aztec, as among all other races of men, good and evil. To judge his good qualities or his defects, and especially his capabilities, aright, we must look at him in his history, and not in the state of moral and material inferiority into which three centuries of servitude have plunged him, and against which he is beginning to react.

According to their traditions, — confirmed by the ideographic paintings that have come down to us, and in which the principal events of their

history are recorded, the Aztecs called their original country *Aztlan*. Aztlan, which some historians locate near Lake Chapalla, and others in the neighborhood of the Gulf of California, seems to have been an island. According to their annals, the Aztecs had left it, on the advice of the most influential man of their nation at that time, — Huitziton. This priest, for some unknown reason, continually urged his countrymen to move southward. One day, standing under a tree, he heard a bird singing, and repeating the word *tihui*, which in the Aztec language means, "let us start." He took another priest as a witness of what he had just heard, and the two persuaded their tribe that the bird was the messenger of a god, who commanded them to set out. In this legend we see, in all probability, the device of a skilful leader, who, in order to induce his countrymen to follow him, made an impression on their superstitious minds by means of a pretended miracle.

It was about the year 648 A. D. that seven of the principal tribes of the great nation of the Nahuatlacs — called Nahua by modern historians — left their fatherland. No point, perhaps, in the history of the ancient Aztecs, has given rise to a greater number of controversies than this long journey, hieroglyphically described in a great many celebrated manuscripts, — which, unfortunately, seemed to contradict one another, and which misled the historians. The recent

labors of Ramirez, and the still more recent researches of Orozco, have dispelled some of the clouds which hung over this subject, and have made the manuscripts agree. It follows from the close and logical studies of the two savants referred to that the famous journey made by the Aztecs was two-fold. At a very remote period they must have advanced towards the valley of Anahuac, and subsequently returned to their own country. Many years after, at the instigation of Huitziton, they marched forth anew, their minds fully made up this time to settle in the beautiful country of which their fathers had only caught a glimpse.

Having left the shores of Lake Chapalla, the emigrants crossed the modern province of Xalisco, followed the course of the Tolotlan River, and stopped at Culiacan. At this place the terrible Huitzilipochtli, the god of war, — whom they had entitled their protector, and of whom they possessed a wooden image, — demanded through the mouth of his priest, Aacatl, that they should build him a tabernacle, and that priests should be charged to carry it. Aacatl — at this time the real head of the tribe — received the orders of the god directly, and transmitted them to the people who followed him. In this way the will of the skilful politician was executed without reply; for no one dared contradict a god.

It was not long before Aacatl, who did not find in the other tribes the same submission as in his

own, caused the god to speak again. The Aztecs, his special *protégés*, received a command to separate from their companions on the journey, and at the same time, to take the name of *Mexi*, as privileged children of Mexitli or Huitzilipochtli. Aacatl thus wiped out the past, and the new name which he chose to give his fellow-countrymen became not only a sign of distinction, but of superiority. Transformed into Mexicatls by the express decree of their favorite god, the Aztecs thenceforth possessed a deep feeling of nationality. Like the Hebrews of old, as has been remarked, they considered themselves the people *par excellence*, and this belief, by the confidence with which it inspired them, enabled them to triumph over the vicissitudes against which nascent nations have to contend.

While the Aztecs led a sedentary life for a time, the other Nahuan nations spread over Anahuac and covered it with kingdoms which, for the most part, possessed no territory save that by which their single city was surrounded. Divided *ad infinitum*, and forgetful of their common origin which should have held them united, the Nahuas were for centuries engaged in ceaseless conflicts with one another. In these struggles, the small states were in time absorbed by the more prosperous, which, in all probability would, to the very last of them, have been absorbed in turn by the Aztecs, had it not been for the coming of the Spaniards.

Having at last left Culiacan, the Aztecs entered the province of Colima; then turning toward the east, they went as far as Tollan. Shortly before reaching this city they had separated into two bands, from a motive which one of their legends explains; and this division was destined to have serious consequences. Two chests were found in their camp. One of them contained a precious stone, the possession of which occasioned violent disputes; the other, two bits of dry wood, which the greater number disdained. But Aacatl, having rubbed the pieces of wood against each other, caused fire to spring forth from them. Those who had preferred the stone afterwards took the name of *Tlatelolcos* ("hill of sand") from the place where they settled; and those who had preferred the wood, that is to say, the useful to the ornamental, took the name of *Tenochcos*. The two parties, although they had suddenly become enemies, nevertheless continued their way together, neither of them wishing to part company with the image of Huitzilipochtli.

The zig-zag route and occasional countermarches of the Aztecs, whom it is useless to follow step by step in their peregrinations, need not surprise us when we remember that they were not journeying towards any definite goal. Many a time they stopped and began to build cabins for themselves; but owing either to the discovery of some unfitness in the place they had selected to settle in, or to the injunction of a neighboring

people, they set out again. At each of these stations, however, they left colonies made up of the sick, or of those who had grown tired of this endless journey.

Thus for several centuries, now tolerated and now repulsed by the people whose territory they were crossing, the Aztecs wandered in search of a definite place where they might settle. About the year 1216, they reached Tzompango ("place of bones"), a large city of the valley to which they were destined afterwards to give their name of Mexicatls from which the words *Mexicans* and *Mexico* have been formed.

Being well received by the Chichimec king Xolotl, who, convinced that he had nothing to fear from them, allowed them to sojourn in his territory, — the Aztecs believed that their long journey had come to an end at last. Soon persecuted, however, by one of the generals of their hosts, whose daughter one of their priests had carried off, they sought refuge at Chapultepec, which belonged to the Colhuas. The latter, after a few years, demanded tribute of them, and on the refusal of the Aztecs to pay it, the Colhuas declared war against them. The Aztecs, having been conquered, were reduced to a veritable slavery, and their existence as a nation seemed compromised for all time.

Defeated in turn by their neighbors the Xochimilcos, the Colhuas called their slaves to their assistance. Animated by the hope of recovering

their liberty, the Aztecs fought furiously, and decided the battle in favor of their masters. In the absence of arms, they had provided themselves with long sticks which they used like lances, and which were besides of great service in helping them to leap over the trenches with which the battle-field was furrowed. Desirous of causing the enemy the greatest possible amount of harm, and at the same time not to lose the benefit of their courage, they agreed, instead of pausing to make them prisoners, to cut off the ears of all those they could reach. After the battle, when their masters took them to task because they had no captives to show, they exhibited such an immense number of ears that the Colhuas, surprised both by the astuteness and the valor of their allies, treated them with even greater severity than before. Overwhelmed with new burdens, and despised by their masters, the fugitives again terrified the Colhuas by human sacrifices, and received an order to depart. Happy over the recovery of their liberty, they again began their peregrinations, and settled near lakes Tezcoco, Xochimilco, Chalco, and Xaltocan, — then much larger than they are now, — from which they were never again to depart. On their arrival, one of their chiefs — the chiefs were twenty in number, and the principal of them was called Tenoch — saw a cactus growing on a rock on an island, and on the cactus an eagle perched, holding in his beak a bird, according to some, — a snake, according to others. The sight

answered to one of the religious traditions of the emigrants. They immediately founded a city there, which they first named Tenochtitlan ("stone and cactus"), and later, Mexico. This happened in 1325. An eagle perched on a cactus and holding a serpent in his beak is the coat of arms of the modern Mexican nation.

The real meaning of the word Mexico has been the subject of a great deal of discussion and is the subject of discussion still. Some suppose it to be derived from' Metzitli ("the moon"), because that body was reflected in the waters of Lake Tezcoco; others believe it to be the name of the chief who commanded the Aztecs at the time of the foundation of the city. Others, less numerous, think that the name signifies *spring* or *fountain.* But, as Orozco justly remarks, the etymology of a word of the Nahuan language should now be sought for in the hieroglyphic which represents it. But indubitably, Mexico, according to the signs which represent it in the ideographic manuscripts, means city of Mexitli, of Huitzilipochtli, or of Mexitzin, which are all one.

Having adopted their new place of residence, the first care of the Aztecs was to build a cabin of mud and reeds, which they called a temple, to shelter the image of their protecting god, Huitzilipochtli. Hunting for an animal to sacrifice on the altar of the god, one of the Aztec chiefs, Xomichil, met a Colhuan, and took him to his fellow-countrymen. The Aztecs, beholding in

this unfortunate being nothing but one of their old oppressors, delivered him to their high-priest, who tore out his heart to offer it to Huitzilipochtli. Thus began the series of terrible massacres which for three centuries stained the capital of the new empire with blood.

Around the rustic temple which they had just built, the Aztecs, for want of more solid materials, constructed groups of simple huts made of earth and reeds. Such was the humble origin of the great city which was destined to become the head of a vast kingdom, and whose magnificence was one day to fill its conquerors with wonder.

Confined on the little islands which then covered Lake Tezcoco, — a fact which shows how small their number was; divided besides into two parties, Tlatelolcos and Tenochcos; in continual dread of the malevolence of their already powerful neighbors, — the Aztecs, who possessed no arable lands, spent many a long year in the most abject misery. Without textures of any kind for clothes, and without the means to manufacture any, they went almost naked, living on fish, insects, and aquatic plants. Made ingenious by necessity, they by degrees united several of the islands, by filling up the canals that separated them; then they obtained stone and wood by exchanging the products of their fishing and hunting for these materials. Finally, to supply the place of land, of which they did not have enough,

they devised the celebrated *chinampas* or floating gardens, on which they were able to cultivate Indian corn and flowers.

They were beginning to extend their possessions, when their protecting god commanded them, by the mouth of his high-priest, to divide their city into four principal quarters, — these latter to be divided into smaller sections, determined by the number of gods worshipped. Certain chiefs, who were probably not greatly favored by this division, retired with their followers to a neighboring island, where they founded the city of Tlatelolco, now Santiago. This separation, the precise date of which is not known, must have taken place eighty-two years after the foundation of Mexico, to which it raised up a rival.

We have now by degrees reached the really historic period of the Aztec annals. Henceforth, thanks to the ideographic paintings, corroborated by tradition, our steps will be more certain and we shall be able to state facts. As we remarked above, we have not thought it necessary to follow step by step the wanderings of the people whom we are endeavoring to resuscitate. It is sufficient for our purpose — which is not to instruct the learned, but to render the history of a once powerful nation accessible to all — to show the origin or beginnings of that nation, and to follow its people to the spot which was to be the theatre of their action and which they were destined to render illustrious. But before treating of their

religion, their customs, and their arts, let us draw a rapid sketch of the reign of the kings who governed the Aztec nation, and endeavor to detract as far as possible from the dryness of a chronology relieved by few cheering facts, and which makes mention of scarcely any events but perpetual battles.

It may be well, however, to glance at the condition of the immense valley which the Aztecs, whom we shall henceforth call Mexicans, are about to conquer, at the moment when they are preparing to elect the first of their kings. As Orozco has proved, at this period, 1357, the barbarous element in the great valley of Anahuac was almost entirely conquered, and the peoples of Nahuan origin governed the other ethnographic families. Divided into an infinite number of small states, the conquerors had changed their name and were striving for an independent existence. There were at this time in the valley about thirty principal cities, united by a sort of feudal bond, each striving to get the mastery, and whose interests were therefore conflicting. The cities of the south united against those of the north, and Quinatzin, king of the Chichimecs, came forth at length victorious from a conflict in which streams of blood had been shed, and the benefits of which the Aztecs were destined to reap.

But before we give a chronological account of the reign of each of the Aztec kings, we must

return to a subject which we merely touched upon when speaking of the Mayas and the Toltecs. We have reference to the celebrated calendar adopted by all the peoples of Anahuac after it had been perfected by the Aztecs. It

Fig. 4. — The Aztec Cycle.

certainly is not our intention to give the dates which we shall have to mention, in the Nahuan language; however, in order to facilitate the understanding of a multitude of facts, it seems desirable to explain the ingenious and exact manner in which the Mexicans divided time.

The Aztec cycle (fig. 4) was represented by a circle, with a picture of the sun in the centre. Around this circle, from right to left, there were representations of the four symbolic signs of the years, signs which were always reproduced in an established order. This cycle, we know, was made up of fifty-two years, divided into four periods of thirteen years each. The first year — we must read from right to left — was called *tochtli*, the rabbit; the second, *acatl*, the reed; the third, *tecpatl*, the flint; the fourth, *calli*, the house. The fifth, taking these objects up again in the same order, was the second rabbit; the sixth, the second reed, and so on up to the thirteenth, after which the series commenced anew, taking the second sign as a starting point. A glance at Fig. 4 will make this explanation clear. It will be noticed that the rings of the serpent which surround the cycle divide it into periods of thirteen years, and that these rings at the same time mark the four cardinal points.

The difference in point of duration between the solar year and the civil year was known to the Aztecs, and to remove this disagreement they added a complementary period of thirteen days — a symbolic number with them — to the end of each of their cycles. In their belief, the transition from one cycle to another might be attended by the destruction of the world; hence, as we shall see, this period was dreaded by them. In the ideographic paintings, the thirteen days

between the end of one cycle and the beginning of another are represented by blue points.

The year, the picture of which is here given (fig. 5), was made up, like our own, of three hundred and sixty-five days. But the Aztec months,

FIG. 5.—THE AZTEC YEAR.

of which there were eighteen, composed of only twenty days, leave an excess of five days, which were called *nemontemi* ("useless"). These days were added to the last month of the year, and were devoted to festivities.

We here give the names of the Aztec months, with their meaning, and the corresponding dates in our own time.

The second of February is adopted as the first day of the year, although this date is strongly disputed.

I.	*Atlacahualco*	want of water	February 2.
II.	*Tlacaxipehualiztli*	boning of men	February 21.
III.	*Tozotontli*	short fast	March 13.
IV.	*Hucitozotli*	long fast	April 2.
V.	*Toxcatl*	dry or slippery	April 22.
VI.	*Etzalcualitzi*	porridge	May 12.
VII.	*Tecuilhuitontli*	little feast of the lords	June 1.
VIII.	*Hueitecuilhuitl*	great feast of the lords	June 21.
IX.	*Tlaxochimaco*	birth of the flowers	July 11.
X.	*Xocohuetzi*	fall of the fruits	July 31.
XI.	*Ochpaniztli*	month of brooms	August 20.
XII.	*Teolteco*	arrival of the gods	September 9.
XIII.	*Tepelhuitl*	feast of the mountains	September 29.
XIV.	*Quecholli*	francolin (bird)	October 19.
XV.	*Panquetzaliztli*	feast of the flags	November 8.
XVI.	*Atemoztli*	fall of the waters	November 28.
XVII.	*Tititl*	severe weather	December 18.
XVIII.	*Izcalli*	resuscitation	January 7.
	Nemontemi	empty or useless days.	

The names of the days (fig. 6) are as follows:—

1.	*Cipactli*	the fish.	11.	*Ozomatli*	the monkey.
2.	*Ehecatl*	the wind.	12.	*Malinalli*	the hay.
3.	*Calli*	the house.	13.	*Acatl*	the reed.
4.	*Cuetzpallin*	the lizard.	14.	*Ocelotl*	the tiger.
5.	*Coatl*	the serpent.	15.	*Cuauhtli*	the eagle.
6.	*Miquiztli*	death.	16.	*Cozcacuahtli*	the bird.
7.	*Mazatl*	the deer.	17.	*Ollin*	the sun.
8.	*Tochtli*	the rabbit.	18.	*Tecpatl*	the flint.
9.	*Atl*	water.	19.	*Quiahuitl*	the rain.
10.	*Itzcuintliz*	the dog.	20.	*Xochitl*	the flower.

Like our own, the Aztec day was divided into four parts:—

Morning . . .	*iquica tonatiuh* . . .	sunrise.
Noon	*nepantla tonatiuh* . .	middle of the sun's course.
Evening . . .	*onaqui tonatiuh* . . .	sunset.
Midnight . . .	*yohualnepantla* . . .	middle of the night.

Such is the famous calendar which, more exact than that of the Egyptians, and than our own

FIG. 6. — DAYS OF THE AZTEC CALENDAR.

at the same period, is certainly superior to the rest of the scientific knowledge possessed by the Mayas, the Toltecs, and the Aztecs. Whose work was it? What man of genius invented it? The chronicles say Quetzacoatl, who appears simply to have appropriated it to himself.

Since the Mexicans afforded their annalists so exact a source of the divisions of time as the one we have just described, is it not strange that the chronology of the greatest facts in their history should have fallen into a veritable chaos immediately after the Spanish conquest? Imperfectly versed in the art of reading the ideographic paintings, and not being able to detect the errors made by the copyists, historians from the first entered upon a wrong road, on which they were followed by those who had become indoctrinated by their writings. On the other hand, more than one student, gratified to find discrepancies which he might endeavor to explain by ingenious hypotheses, mistook his way and departed still farther from the goal he was seeking. It was not long before each writer had his own chronology, and all agreement was impossible.

Struck by this anarchy, the learned and indefatigable Orozco undertook to remedy it. He wisely considered that the solution of the problem he wished to throw light on could not be found in a comparison of documents posterior to the conquest, which to a greater or lesser extent repeated each other, but in those of Aztec origin, that is to say, in the hieroglyphic paintings. He therefore made a close study of such of these documents as had been preserved, and saw that the sixty-three ideographic manuscripts collected by the first viceroy of Mexico to be sent to Charles V., and which are known as the *Codex de*

Mendoza, was the most accurate source that could be consulted. Following his example, and convinced that, thanks to the labor of the learned Mexican, it will henceforth be considered authority, we take the Codex Mendoza as our guide.

CHAPTER IV.

First Aztec Kings. — Acamapictli. — Huitzilihuitl. — Quimalpopoca. — Itzacoatl. — Moteuczoma Ilhuicamina. — Axayacatl. — Tizoc. — Ahuizotl. — Retrospect.

UP to the year 1363, which must have been subsequent to the most ancient eruption known of Popocatepetl, the political government of the Aztecs was aristocratic. They obeyed a council composed of twenty of the most notable men of the tribe, first among whom, as might naturally be expected, was the high-priest of Huitzilipochtli. According to the Codex Mendoza, the president of the great council at the time of the founding of Mexico was called Tenoch. It was after his death that the Aztecs, following the example of their neighbors, the Alcolhuas, the Tepanecs and the Chichimecs, who prospered under regal authority, thought of adopting the same form of government. As they desired a sovereign who would have their well-being at heart, and who, if need were, could command their army, they chose Acamapictli ("the hand full of reeds"), who was famed for his wisdom. On his father's side, the sovereign elect belonged to the Aztec nobility, and on his

mother's to that of the Alcolhuas, among whom, it is believed, he was brought up.

During the thirty years of his reign Acamapictli wisely ruled the few cities that constituted his entire kingdom, and his people increased greatly in numbers; but being a feudatory of the king of the Tepanecs, Tezozomoc, he had to assist him in many of his wars.

It was not long before Tezozomoc, infatuated by his power, demanded from the Mexicans not only military services, but large and often unreasonable tribute. Thus, under pain of complete servitude, he ordered them one day to furnish him with a field sown with Indian corn, allspice, and gourds, and light enough to float on the water. At the appointed time, the tyrant, to his great astonishment, saw the field which he had ordered advance towards the shore of the lake; it was the first of the floating isles, which at a later date filled the Spaniards with wonder. The effect of the extravagant and apparently unrealizable caprice of Tezozomoc was to stimulate the inventive powers of his vassals, and what was intended to be their ruin turned to their advantage. For want of arable lands they betook themselves to filling their lakes with *chinampas*, or floating islands, and their material condition was thus greatly improved.

In spite of the unfavorable circumstances in which he was placed in consequence of the subjection to which he was condemned, Acamapictli

succeeded in ruling in peace. He caused a great many stone buildings to be constructed in his capital, and began the canals of the lake. He died in 1396, regretting that he had not been able to relieve his people from the crushing yoke of the Tepanecs. In the ideographic manuscripts Acamapictli is represented by a crowned head, surmounted by a hand holding a bunch of reeds.

After an interregnum of some months, electors, chosen from the nobles of the four quarters of Mexico, elected prince Huitzilihuitl ("feather of the humming bird"), son of the deceased king, as their ruler. The people having approved of the choice thus made, the young prince was conducted to the royal mansion, seated on the throne, the *copilli* or crown placed on his head, and was anointed, according to Acosta (whom Torquemada, we believe wrongfully, contradicts), with the "divine balsam" used in the service of Huitzilipochtli, — that is to say, pine resin.

The new king was not married, and although the undertaking seemed a rash one, Acamapictli having unsuccessfully attempted it, the nobles determined to have him espouse the daughter of Tezozomoc. The latter, who contemplated the subjugation of the peoples who surrounded his kingdom, was just then in great need of allies, Desirous of attaching the Aztecs, whose bravery he was acquainted with, to himself, he accepted the proposed marriage, and reduced the heavy

tribute he had thus far exacted to some simple gifts of an insignificant value.

Having become the son-in-law of the powerful king of the Tepanecs, and seeing the advantages which this relation had secured him, Huitzilihuitl (sovereigns had the right to have several wives) lost no time in allying himself to the principal chiefs of the valley. A crafty politician, he knew how to profit by these alliances, and the ascending march of the Aztecs dates from his reign. Faithful to Tezozomoc, Huilzilihuitl seconded him in all the wars which he undertook; rendered him many services, and returned more than once to his own capital a victor. Thanks to their intrepidity and to the talents of their sovereign, the political situation of the Mexicans was bettered, their material condition improved, and their sword began to have weight in the balance of the neighboring kings. Having become freer, without ceasing to be industrious, they extended their commerce, and substituted cotton clothing for the garments of agave fibre which they then wore.

At this time Maxatla, the brother-in-law and special enemy of their king, called together the nobility of Azcapozalco, capital of the Tepanecs, and directed their attention to the rapid prosperity of the Aztecs, to their pride and growing power, representing them as enemies to be feared in the near future. Huitzilihuitl, still too weak to fight against the Tepanecs, had to humiliate

himself and help his enemy in another war. He died before it was ended, in 1417. He had reigned twenty years, enacted useful laws, extended his kingdom by draining many of the marshes formed by the lake, remodelled the army, and definitively granted to the nobles the right to elect their kings. These electors chose his brother Quimalpopoca as his successor, and it was then established that the new sovereign should always be chosen from among the brothers, or if there were none, from among the nephews of the deceased king. In the ideographic manuscripts, a bird's head, holding a feather in its beak, surmounts the head of the second king of the Mexicans.

Quimalpopoca ("smoking shield") left almost nothing in the history of his country but the remembrance of his domestic misfortunes and of his tragic end. His wife, allured to the court of Maxatla, usurper of the throne of Alcolhuacan, which belonged to his nephew Nezahualcoyotl, was violated by the tyrant. This was an affront all the more insulting as, a short time before, Maxatla, in exchange for a present which the Aztecs had offered him, had answered by sending them a dress of a woman. Unable to avenge himself for these insults, the unfortunate king determined to sacrifice himself on the altar of Huitzilipochtli. Apprised of his design, Maxatla, who must have had informants among the Mexican nobility, had Quimalpopoca carried off by

surprise, and confined him in a wooden cage. Tired of life, the royal prisoner hung himself to the bars of his prison in 1427. He had reigned thirteen years.

During this period the Mexican nation, in spite of the misfortunes of its king, had progressed and had won a naval battle on the lake, against the inhabitants of Chalco, who had tried to surprise them. The great causeway which connected Mexico with Tlacotalpan was constructed during the reign of Quimalpopoca, and, according to Torquemada, it was he also who erected the first of the so-called sacrificial stones and another destined for gladiatorial fights.

Humiliated by the tyrant of Alcolhuacan, the Aztecs resolved to place at their head a man capable of avenging them, and the electors gave the crown of Quimalpopoca to his half-brother on his father's side, Itzacoatl ("serpent of stone"), a natural son of Acamapictli and a slave. The shame cast upon him by his mother's condition was redeemed by his own merit, — by the military talents of which he had given many proofs during the thirty years that he had commanded the army. Once in power he resolved to conquer the city of Azcapozalco, and finally to release his people from the weighty supremacy of the Tepanecs. With this intention he allied himself to the celebrated Alcolhuan prince, Nezahualcoyotl, and marched against Maxatla. Well seconded by his nephews, Tlacaelel and Moteuc-

zoma, — whose military exploits some historians at times seem to confound, — Itzacoatl had the satisfaction of seeing his endeavors crowned with success. A terrible battle, which lasted two whole days, was fought and won against Maxatla in person, who was pursued into his own capital. This memorable fight, which by its consequences almost completely changed the political condition of the valley of Anahuac, took place in 1428, about a century after the foundation of Mexico.

In this supreme struggle Itzacoatl had been abandoned for a moment by the people of his capital, who, dreading the results of an unequal contest, had mutinied in the very hour of battle. Therefore, once victorious, the king especially rewarded the nobility, who had valiantly seconded him. He confirmed their old privileges, conferred new ones on them, and divided the greater part of the conquered territory among them and the priests. But one of his first cares was to place Nezahualcoyotl, his faithful ally, again on the throne of Alcolhuacan, and to appoint a noble of the Tepanecs who had been opposed to the war to govern them. The two new kings agreed to sustain the sovereign of Mexico in all his wars, and to recognize his supremacy. This double treaty of alliance was not the only illustration of Itzacoatl's political ability; he took care to reward all those who had distinguished themselves in the recent struggle, measuring the reward by the valor which

each one had displayed or by the services he had rendered, without taking any account of his condition. This act of wisdom, imitated by his successors, was an incentive to the Aztecs, and one of the causes of their future greatness.

Itzacoatl, who won from his fellow-countrymen the name of *the Great*, died in 1440, at a very advanced age. He had served his country during thirty years as a general, and had governed it during thirteen as king. He delivered the Aztecs from all servitude, made numerous and important conquests, placed the descendants of the ancient Chichimec kings again on the throne of their ancestors, enriched his country with the spoils of conquered peoples, built a great many edifices in his capital, and increased the number of alliances which paved the way to the greatness of the nation he had wisely governed. For political reasons of which we are ignorant, — he wished, the annalists say, to efface the past from the memory of his people, — he caused a great number of the paintings which recalled the history of bygone times to be destroyed.

The four electors charged with the selection of his successor did not have to deliberate long. Itzacoatl had no brother; the crown had therefore to revert to one of his nephews, and no one was more worthy of this honor than Moteuczoma Ilhuicamina ("he who throws arrows towards the sky"), the "man given to anger," according to Torquemada. This prince, son of Huitzilihuitl,

had won a number of battles, had aided Itzacoatl in all his works, had given a thousand proofs of energy and capacity; hence he was unanimously elected.

After the harangues, dances, and illuminations which followed every new election, Moteuczoma, in obedience to the custom which required that the kings should in person conquer the prisoners that were to be sacrificed on the day of their coronation, began a campaign against the inhabitants of Chalco, who had treacherously retained him captive when he was only a general. Seconded by Tlacaelel, who, on account of his military talent and wisdom was called the prince of the armies, he conquered them, and took many prisoners; then, without completing the subjugation of the enemy, he returned to be crowned.

After this, desiring to secure the favor of the gods, one of his first cares was to order the building of a temple. The work went on rapidly; for the Aztec sovereigns, in the execution of their plans, proceeded after the manner of the kings of Egypt. They brought the workmen together by thousands, not concerning themselves about their liberty, and still less about their sufferings, the life of a vassal being of little value in their eyes. When the temple was built the active warrior took the field again, and after a prolonged struggle, he at last succeeded in subjugating the Chalcoans, who had been defeated in a decisive battle. Upon the field of battle

he devised a somewhat original decoration for those of his soldiers who had distinguished themselves. He had the cartilage of the nose pierced, and into the opening thus made feathers ornamented with jewels and which represented mustaches were introduced. The victorious army was then led back to Tenochtitlan and received with unusual demonstrations of joy. Pompous funeral ceremonies were afterwards celebrated, in honor of those who had fallen.

Taking up arms again a short time afterwards, Moteuczoma quickly subjugated the entire valley of Anahuac to his laws. But his glorious reign was saddened by many calamities. In the first place, a flood, produced by the excessive rains of 1449, nearly destroyed Mexico. On the advice of Nezahualcoyotl, Moteuczoma caused a dike nine miles long to be built, one which, without being an absolute protection to the city, at least preserved it from surprise. This dike, which still exists, is called the Albarreda Vieja.

This calamity was scarcely remedied when there came severe frosts, followed by a drought, which for four consecutive years, from 1450 to 1454, destroyed the crops of Indian corn, the principal food of the nation. Then the valley was covered with several feet of snow, a phenomenon unknown up to that time. Not being able, in spite of his generous measures, to feed his subjects, Moteuczoma permitted them to emigrate.

Years of good crops having come again, the Mexicans were obliged to contend with the Miztecs, and lost the first battle they gave. But this defeat was quickly repaired by the king, who took possession of the country of the vanquished. He then caused to be sculptured the famous Temalacatl ("wheel of stone"), the bas-reliefs of which represent the principal facts of the war against the Tepanecs, and on which were fought the so-called gladiatorial combats. He had one of those celebrated stones called "stones of the sun" (cuauhxicalli) cut; he also had his portrait sculptured on the rocks of Chapultepec, and afterwards had the Cuauxicalco built.

Huehue Moteuczoma Ilhuicamina, who was doubtless the ablest of the Aztec rulers, undertook a number of wars, which his military talents and the skill of Tlacaelel, his principal lieutenant, turned to his advantage; he formed a vast and victorious empire out of the small tributary kingdom in which he was born. Although always engaged in expeditions against his neighbors, he never neglected the civil government of his kingdom; he promulgated the laws demanded by the changes that had taken place in it, and introduced a ceremonial previously unknown into his court. He caused a magnificent temple to the god of war to be erected, increased the number of priests, — but also, unfortunately, the number of human sacrifices. A very temperate man, Moteuczoma enacted severe laws

against drunkenness; and his subjects worshipped him for his justice. He died in 1469, after a reign of not less than twenty years, having finished the work begun by Itzacoatl. In Aztec manuscripts the head of Moteuczoma is surmounted by a portion of the sky, studded with stars, towards which an arrow is represented as flying.

The obsequies of Moteuczoma over, the crown was offered to Tlacaelel. The old warrior declined the honor, declaring that he considered himself more useful to the nation as a general than he could be as king, and asked that all votes should be cast for Axayacatl ("the fly"). Tlacaelel's selection being accepted, in lieu of the title of sovereign he himself was invested by the electors with royal prerogatives, and even with the right to wear a crown. Spite of these honors, and of the influence which he exercised on the nobles, the army, and the people, Tlacaelel remained the devoted servant of the empire which his talents had helped to found. Does not this conduct alone entitle him to the name of *the Great*, which his contemporaries bestowed upon him?

Axayacatl, the sixth king of Mexico, was a brother of the three sovereigns who had preceded Moteuczoma on the throne. Immediately after his election he set out on an expedition against the kingdom of Tehuantepec, to capture the prisoners he had to take for the religious

sacrifices of his coronation. A victor, he enlarged his states by the addition of the territory of the vanquished, and returned to his capital laden with spoils. His reign, moreover, like that of his predecessor, was an uninterrupted series of conquests. He embellished the temple of Huitzilipochtli; he had his picture sculptured near that of Moteuczoma on the rocks of Chapultepec, and new stones for the sacrifices erected.

Axayacatl, it is said, made obligatory by a law the custom which required a sovereign to wage victorious war before his coronation. At one time, wounded in the thigh and overthrown in single combat with an Otomite chief, he nearly lost his life. Although permanently crippled, he continued to wage war. He was belligerent, rude, severe, and unbending in the execution of the laws.

Having died in 1481, Axayacatl was succeeded by his eldest brother, Tizoc ("the leg covered with wounds"), who served as a general in the army, and to whom the aged Tlacaelel, who died shortly after, gave his vote. The reign of this king was short, but taken up with continual wars, — he conquered no less than fourteen cities. In the ethnographic museum of Trocadero is a cast of the famous cylindrical stone, cuauhxicalli, which, following the example of his predecessor, he caused to be erected in Mexico, in honor of the sun, and on whose circumference bas-reliefs

represent the details of the battles which he fought. Tizoc died in 1486, in the fifth year of his reign, poisoned by two of his feudatory magnates, who were afterwards brought to Mexico and executed in the great square, in the presence of the allied kings and of the nobility.

A sovereign of great activity, Tizoc had begun the construction of a new temple dedicated to Huitzilipochtli, which he intended should surpass in magnificence all those then in existence. A recent study of Dr. Hamy on the proper reading of the chronographic inscription of a tablet of obsidian, discovered near Mexico in 1865, and now in the museum of Trocadero, reveals an unexpected fact. The tablet in question is considered by the learned Americanist as a monument commemorative of the greatest architectural work attempted by the Aztecs, and perhaps as the corner-stone laid by Tizoc when the foundation of the temple was laid. In fact, this small monument bears the date of the ninth day of the month of flags, in the fourth year of the reed; that is, according to our calendar, the ninth of December, 1483, — the very day consecrated to Huitzilipochtli.

Tizoc was succeeded by Ahuitzotl ("the otter"), a brother of the two preceding kings, who immediately took the field to capture his victims. The festivities on the occasion of the coronation of the new emperor were the most magnificent that had ever been seen; and a thousand pris-

oners were sacrificed. Immediately after this, Ahuitzotl busied himself with the completion of the temple begun by his predecessor; and so great was the number of workmen put upon it that the vast edifice, comparable to the monuments of the ancient kings of Egypt, was finished in four years. During this time Ahuitzotl continued to wage war; and all the prisoners captured by his soldiers were reserved for the feast of the inauguration of the great temple. When that day came, the devout flocked from all parts of the empire; and the number of visitors, it is said, exceeded six millions. The festivities lasted four days, and the prisoners were mercilessly massacred. The annalists do not agree as to the number of those whose hearts were torn out; none of them estimate it at less than fifteen thousand, and some place it as high as sixty thousand!

Ahuitzotl, as belligerent as his predecessors, was constantly at war. In 1498, navigation on the lake being hampered in consequence of want of rain, he conceived the idea, spite of the representations made him, of bringing water from the Huitzilipocho spring by means of a canal. But a rainy year followed the years of drought, and the city was inundated. Surprised in his palace by the rising waters, the king in his flight struck his forehead against a door. He died in 1502, from the effects of this blow, after two years of suffering. By his

conquests he had extended the Mexican empire to about the limits it has to-day.

Besides his courage, Ahuitzotl possessed really royal qualities; and his liberality won for him the love of his subjects. He adorned Mexico with such a number of handsome buildings that at this time it was undoubtedly the most beautiful city of the New World. When he received the tribute sent by the provinces, Ahuitzotl was in the habit of calling the people together and of distributing clothes and provisions among those that seemed in need of them. Officers and soldiers who had distinguished themselves in war, and ministers and employees of the crown who had served him faithfully, were rewarded with gifts of bars of gold or silver, or with presents of jewels or rare and costly feathers. Unfortunately, his good qualities were obscured by lamentable faults. He was capricious, inclined to vengeance, cruel, and so fond of war that peace seemed odious to him. Hence his name, in the language of Spanish-Americans, serves to designate a man always ready to pick a quarrel.

At the death of Ahuitzotl, none of his brothers was living. The number of his nephews, however, was large. The electors chose a son of Axayacatl, named Moteuczoma, whom they characterized as *Xoyocotzin* ("the younger"), to distinguish him from the first. This was the monarch who had to contend with Cortez, and

whom our historians have accustomed us to call Montezuma.

To recapitulate again: Although, as we have said, undoubted data in regard to the history of the first inhabitants of Anahuac are wanting, — although the great journey of the Aztecs from their native country, Aztlan, to their settlement on Lake Tezcoco, presents a number of obscure, contradictory, and insoluble points, — there is an abundance of documents, beginning with the reign of Itzacoatl. We might have lengthened this account by quoting the speeches addressed to each king at the time of his accession to the throne, and the harangues of the generals at the moment of giving battle, and by describing in detail the combats and incessant struggles of the cities among themselves. But what interest can the recital of uniform events, which follow one another with painful monotony, and which most frequently serve only to demonstrate the cruelty of man, have for any one except perhaps a Mexican? Hence it is only in broad outline that we have thought it advisable to relate the principal facts which gave the Aztecs supremacy over their neighbors; and we have avoided fatiguing the attention of the reader with the recital of facts which not a single anecdote enlivens. We have seen the civilizing power pass from the hands of the Toltecs to the Chichimecs, then to the Alcolhuas, and finally to the Aztecs. These nations, we must not omit to state, never rose above a

semi-barbarous condition. The priests, nobles, and soldiers possessed all the privileges, and sought to increase them by reducing as large a number of men as possible to servitude. It is indeed true that by forming important national unities the conquerors were unwittingly working for the cause of civilization and for the future of humanity. But it is idle to indulge in conjectures, and to attempt to say what would have become of the great Aztec empire if it had not been overthrown by Cortez.

To resume: From their humble beginning, which has been justly compared with that of the Romans, we have seen the Aztec people rise, fall into servitude, and then rising again, gradually overcome by their patience, energy, courage, and the ability of their general-kings, the peoples by whom they were surrounded. The greater part of these peoples, it must not be forgotten, had the same origin and spoke the same language as the Aztecs. Indeed, the victories of the Mexicans were not obtained over foreigners or over men of a race different from their own. These victories reduced to unity the scattered members of one and the same family, and from that time, Itzacoatl appealed to the great modern principle of nationalities in justification of his conquests. One thing is certain, — in his eyes, as in the eyes of all conquerors, might was right.

CHAPTER V.

MOTEUCZOMA II. — HIS CORONATION. — CEREMONIAL OF HIS COURT. — HIS PALACES. — THE ASPECT OF MEXICO. — ARRIVAL OF THE SPANIARDS. — CUITLAHUATZIN. — CUAUHTEMOTZIN. — END OF THE AZTEC EMPIRE.

THUS far we have rapidly passed over the exploits and feats of the Aztec kings. We shall, however, be less brief in speaking of Moteuczoma II. Detailing the ceremonies attending his election and the peculiar features of his coronation, and also describing the etiquette of his court, we shall give an exact idea of Mexican civilization at a date when Columbus had already discovered America, and when Cortez was preparing to embark, ignorant of the name of the country he was soon to conquer, and not even suspecting the immortal glory that fortune had in store for him.

The obsequies of Ahuitzotl being over, the electors and the allied kings met in the hall of the palace intended for great ceremonies. In the middle of this hall, an immense brazier burned; near it were placed a censer filled with copal resin, the royal insignia, and three pointed bones, one of which had belonged to a jaguar, another to a puma, and the third to an eagle.

Around the electors, at that time twelve in number, crowded the sons of the deceased kings, doubtless to solicit votes. Moteuczoma Xocoyotzin, son of Axayacatl, was elected with but little opposition. Renowned for his modesty, and greatly respected because of his priestly character, this prince spoke little, and acted with deliberation; his counsels had always been of great weight in the royal debates.

As soon as his name was mentioned, the new sovereign was sought for, that he might be congratulated. But at the first indication of the vote, Moteuczoma retired to a temple, declaring that he was unworthy of the honor just conferred upon him. Some of the nobles went to inform him of the result of the election, and found him, a broom in his hand, sweeping a court. They led him back to the palace, where the electors proclaimed him king.

The Cihuacoatl ("supreme judge") again notified him of his election. They seated him on the throne, and a priest cut off his hair. They then pierced the cartilage of his nose, for the introduction of a small stone cylinder, called "acapitzactli," then the lower lip, for the reception of a ring, or "tentetl," and they adorned his ears with golden ear-rings. At the same time they covered his shoulders with the royal mantle, and clothed his feet with rich buskins. This toilet finished, the crown was placed on his head, and he walked towards the brazier. There he

burned incense, in honor of the gods, especially in honor of the god of fire; after which, armed with the pointed bones, he punctured his ears with that of the jaguar, the fleshy part of the thigh with that of the puma, and the calves of his legs with the eagle's bone, wounding himself deeply enough to draw a little blood. After this operation they presented him with partridges, whose heads he tore off to sprinkle the fire with their blood. He was then conducted to the temple of Huitzilipochtli, where he repeated the same ceremonies. At last, being saluted emperor, he seated himself on the throne to receive homage from his feudatories, and to hear their addresses of congratulation.

Not many days after his investiture Moteuczoma bethought himself of the victims he had to secure for the feast of his coronation; and at the head of the flower of his nobility, accompanied by his brothers and cousins, he marched against the Otomites, who had just revolted. This war was a hard one and cost the Mexicans many of their most experienced captains. Nevertheless, the Emperor, who had fought bravely, and who considered himself victorious, brought back five thousand prisoners. The usual rejoicings, with an unwonted display of luxury, sports, dances, and illuminations, then followed; but it was noticed that, at the hour of the sacrifices, the humble Moteuczoma had taken a position in the midst of the images of the gods.

The presents sent by the provinces on this

occasion were so numerous that tributaries from all parts of the empire, who appeared there now for the first time, were seen in the streets of Mexico. All gifts received, as well as the booty taken on his expedition, were distributed by the Emperor among the priests, the nobles, and the plebeians.

Once anointed with the balm set apart for the gods, Moteuczoma began his reign with an act of gratitude and justice, — giving the government of a province to one of the oldest and bravest officers of the army. But belying his past life, and the promise afforded by this act of wisdom, he gave evidence of the pride he had up to that time concealed under the mask of humility. Before his succession to the throne all official positions had been given to men of the greatest merit or ability, without regard to caste. Deaf to the remonstrances that were made to him, Moteuczoma suddenly declared that plebeians were tainted with baseness, and drove from his palace all of them who were there employed. He even, according to Duran, condemned a large number of them to death. Wishing in future to be served only by nobles, he posed as a god ; and five or six hundred great feudatories, besides those who lived in the palace, were ordered to come every morning to assist at his rising. These high dignitaries, who dared appear in his presence only with their feet bare, held themselves constantly in waiting in his antechambers, so that they might be always

ready to receive his orders; they were not allowed to speak above a whisper for fear of disturbing him.

Moteuczoma II. gradually became a true despot, a sultan. He had a harem of a thousand women; and rewarded the services rendered him by the gift of one of these favorites. He enacted that the nobles of the empire should come each in turn and reside at his court for three months, and that their sons or their brothers should live in Mexico, so that he might have a pledge of their fidelity under his thumb.

His despotism appears still more plainly in the ceremonial he introduced into his palace, where no one could present himself in costly garments, for he looked upon such display as a want of the respect due to his dignity. Hence, in his palace all the nobles, excepting his kinsmen, wore coarse clothes as a sign of humility, and spoke to him only in a low tone of voice, and with bowed head. He was treated as "hueitlatoani", that is, lord of lords. His words were received as oracles; in retiring from his presence all walked backwards.

Moteuczoma took his meals in the hall in which he gave his audiences. There, an immense cushion served him for a table, and he seated himself on a small bench provided with a back. The vessels he used were made of clay from Cholullan, his table-cloth was of fine cotton carefully bleached. None of the utensils were used by him a second time; after his repast, they

were distributed among his courtiers. The cups from which he drank were of gold, or of pearl, or were carved out of gourds, artistically painted. He possessed golden vessels also, but he used these only in the temple.

A great many dishes were prepared for each of his meals. Cortez relates that they filled a large hall, and that birds, fish, vegetables, and fruits of all kinds were set before the king every day. Four hundred young nobles, in orderly files, brought the plates, set them on the table before which the king was seated, then retired. To preserve its heat each plate rested on a chafing-dish, — a custom that has passed to Europe. The king indicated with a short pointer the dishes of which he wished to partake, and the others were immediately distributed among his courtiers. Twenty of his wives brought him water wherewith to wash his hands, and they, together with the ministers and the major-domo, assisted at his repast.

The latter, as soon as the king was seated, closed the door of the hall so that the courtiers might not see him eat. Then musical instruments resounded, or jesters displayed their wit. The Emperor was very fond of the latter entertainment, which, he said, gave him useful hints. After his meal he smoked perfumed tobacco, which his wives presented him in a pipe of varnished bamboo; he frequently took a nap after dinner.

His siesta over, Moteuczoma gave audience to his subjects, attentively listening to what they

told him, and encouraging those who were in trouble; he conveyed his answers to them by the mouth of his ministers. After the audience, musicians came; for he loved to hear the exploits of his ancestors sung. When he went out he reclined on a litter covered with a magnificent canopy, borne by nobles and accompanied by a numerous retinue. If it happened that he had to walk they spread out a carpet, so that he might not touch the ground. On his approach his subjects were required to stop and close their eyes, that they might not be dazzled by his majesty. The plebeians believed that lightning would strike any one bold enough to look the emperor in the face.

The magnificence of the royal palaces and gardens was in keeping with this pomp. The principal residence of Moteuczoma, in Mexico, was a vast stone edifice, whose twenty doors opened upon the great market-place and upon the side streets. This palace contained three courts, a multitude of halls, with walls covered with slabs of jasper or marble, or with paintings, and more than a hundred small rooms. The roof of the building was of carved cedar. Among the halls there was one — according to the testimony of an eye-witness, the anonymous Conqueror — large enough to contain three thousand people. The same witness adds that having gone through the palace three times, walking until he was worn out with fatigue, he was, nevertheless, unable to

see it all. The oratory, one hundred and fifty feet long and fifty broad, was adorned with golden plates studded with precious stones. Besides this residence, the king owned several others, in which were lodged his wives, his ministers, his counsellors, strangers of note, or the kings who came to visit him.

He had established two large menageries in Mexico, one for all kinds of birds, except birds of prey, the other for quadrupeds and reptiles. The first of these establishments was provided with porticos, surrounding a garden of magnificent trees. In this there were ten ponds, some of which were supplied with fresh water for river-birds, and others with salt water for sea-birds. This aviary had such a large number of birds of all kinds that the Spaniards believed it contained all winged species. Each bird was supplied with the food, grain, fruit, or insects which it sought in the state of freedom. Cortez, in his letters to Charles V., says that two hundred and fifty pounds of fish were daily required to feed the aquatic birds. Three hundred servants were employed in collecting the eggs and looking after the health of these guests, which were plucked once a year. Their feathers, which were collected with care, were used in the mosaic work, which was long the admiration of Europe. The menagerie set aside for deer, beasts of prey, and reptiles, was divided in such a way that the animals might shelter themselves from the rain or enjoy the

sun. The eagles, pumas, tigers, foxes, etc., to whom stags, rabbits, and, — is it necessary to add? — the remains of human victims sacrificed to the gods, were given as food, were lodged in holes or wooden cages. The bodies of the Spaniards killed during the famous retreat of the *Noche triste*, served for many days as food for these carnivora. The reptiles, — alligators, serpents, iguanas, basilisks and small snakes, — as well as the fishes, had representatives in this palace.

Not content with having brought together all the known animals of his empire, Moteuczoma also made a collection of men, who, on account of the color of their hair, their skin, or of some rare deformity, might be regarded as curiosities. Besides this, he had all plants remarkable for the beauty of their flowers or the utility of their medicinal properties cultivated in the royal gardens. An island in Lake Tezcoco, to-day known as Penon, served him as a hunting-park. Of all that we have just described scarcely anything remains now but the park of Chapultepec; revenge and superstition have annihilated these marvels, the existence of which, as our principal guide, Clavigero, remarks, is known to us only through the writings of those who destroyed them.

The palaces and gardens were carefully kept. Moteuczoma was fond of order and neatness. He bathed each morning, and changed his clothes four times a day. Those that he took off he

never wore again; they were given as a reward to the nobles or soldiers who had distinguished themselves in war. By his orders more than a thousand men were employed to sweep the city of Mexico daily.

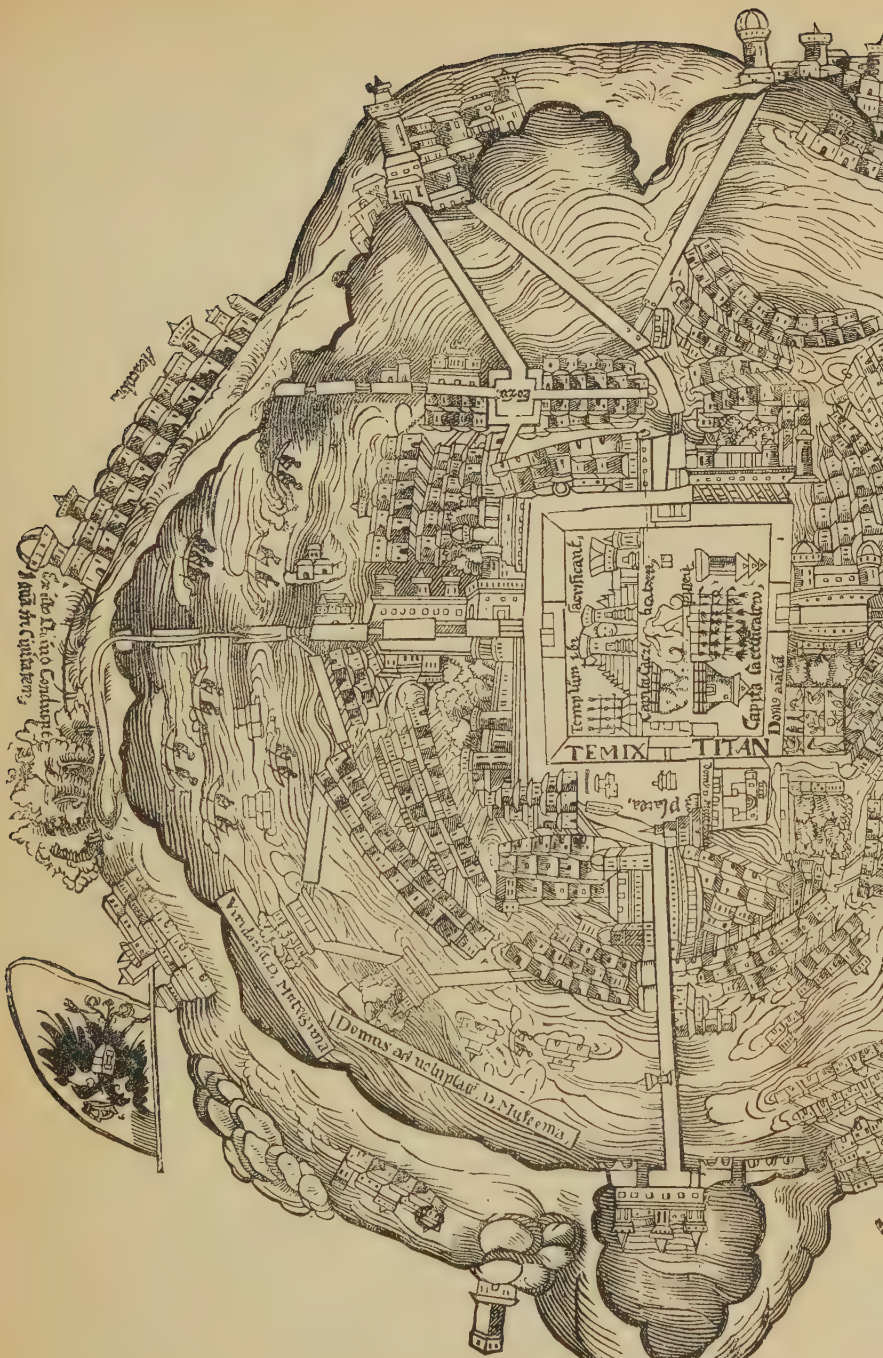
This despot, however, was not wanting in good qualities in the eyes of his people. He had a fervent zeal for religion. He caused a number of temples to be built for the idols, to whom he offered frequent sacrifices. He was always faithful in observing the established rites and ceremonies; he had a firm belief in the oracles. He carefully attended to the execution of his orders and of the laws, showing himself inexorable towards those who transgressed them. It often happened that he had gifts secretly offered to the judges, and if they allowed themselves to be bribed, he punished them without pity, even when they belonged to the highest nobility.

An implacable enemy of idleness, he endeavored to keep his subjects always busy. He compelled his soldiers to practise military tactics continually, interested himself in agriculture, and also caused large buildings to be constructed to furnish labor to workmen of every trade. He relentlessly pursued beggars, and imposed on them a fine consisting of the insects engendered by uncleanness, the habitual companion of abject poverty. His despotism, the enormous tributes he exacted, his pride, the severity with which he punished the least fault, made him hated on the

one hand, and on the other, he attached his subjects to him by helping the unfortunate, and enriching those who served him. He was the first to think of establishing an asylum for citizens who, having served the country either in public offices or in the army, might be in need of help on account of their limited means, their wounds, or their infirmities. He gave them the city of Colhuacan, where they were lodged, clothed, fed, and cared for at the expense of the state.

Another subject of his solicitude was the embellishment of Mexico. At this period, the city — of which we give a facsimile of the plan engraved shortly after the conquest, for which we are under obligations to Dr. Hamy — could be approached only by four causeways, that crossed the lake. The southern one, called Iztapalapan, was seven miles long; the northern or Tepejacac causeway measured three; the causeway of Tlacopan about two; and the fourth, of equal length, served as a passage to the double aqueduct of Chapultepec. All these roads were broad enough to allow ten men on horseback to pass along abreast.

Covering a great deal of ground, and thickly peopled, Mexico measured nine miles in circumference, — its important suburbs not included. The "anonymous Conqueror," Gomara, Herrera, and many other historians state that the number of houses in the city exceeded sixty thousand;



FACSIMILE OF A PLAN OF TENOCHTITLAN, EXECUTED SHORTLY AF

but they are silent in regard to the number of its inhabitants.

Mexico, as we have seen, was divided into four large districts, subdivided into a multitude of smaller ones. The city was surrounded with dikes and sluices, intended, according to circumstances, to hold the waters or to carry them off. A canal ran along almost every street, which could be travelled either in boat or on foot; this was of great assistance to commerce, and of great help against an enemy. The principal streets were straight, wide, and provided with sidewalks; the second-class roads consisted of simple canals bordered by houses, trees, and even quays for the unloading of merchandise.

Besides palaces and temples, Mexico possessed a large number of edifices belonging to individuals. The houses — those of the poor excepted — were surmounted by terraces with embattled parapets, and sometimes by towers. In case of need, these dwellings might be converted into real fortresses, — as Cortez discovered to his sorrow.

Without counting the principal market, which was held in the celebrated square of Tlatelolco, many others, in which provisions were sold, existed in the various districts. The temples were surrounded with gardens ornamented with basins and fountains. All buildings, as a police measure, were carefully whitewashed and polished. According to the Spaniards, the terraces with their

embattled parapets, the towers of the temples, the large trees of the gardens, especially when observed from the top of the great temple, — a height from which the lake and the villages scattered on its borders could be seen, — presented one of the most picturesque spectacles imaginable.

The streets of Mexico were sprinkled morning and evening, to lay the dust. At nightfall braziers were lighted at all points of the city, and were kept burning until daybreak. No one except soldiers on guard was allowed to go about armed in the streets, which were continually patrolled by watchmen; hence the city enjoyed absolute tranquillity. We may add that from hour to hour priests stationed on the towers of the temples measured the flight of time by observing the stars, and announced the hour by blowing through conch-shells.

But let us return to Moteuczoma. After his expedition against the Atlexcas, he again reduced to obedience the provinces of Tlachquiauhco and Achiotlan, which had revolted. He soon undertook a war in which he was less fortunate, — one which was destined to have unexpected consequences.

Of all the provinces formed into states which surrounded Mexico, the little republic of Tlaxcala alone preserved itself intact. Some historians claim, not without reason, that the Mexican kings always spared this republic because it

allowed them to exercise their troops and to procure prisoners necessary for the sacrifices. It is certain, however, that the Tlaxcaltecs were brave, numerous, and very jealous of their liberty.

Seeing Moteuczoma preparing to invade their country, they called all the malcontents to their aid, and accepted the barbarous Otomites as allies. A Mexican army, commanded by a son of the king, was entirely defeated, and the young prince killed. Moteuczoma was preparing to march against the enemy, when reports of the appearance of the Spaniards began to circulate. Cortez arrived just in time. In the warlike Tlaxcaltecs, ready to fight to defend their independence, he found the auxiliaries he needed, considering the small number of his own soldiers, to conquer the valiant troops of Moteuczoma.

It is possible to imagine the emotion caused by the surprising news of the presence on the shores of the Atlantic of floating palaces, managed by bearded men with white skins, who seemed to control the thunder, and who doubled their stature by getting upon animals of monstrous shape and size, — horses. Ancient traditions prophesied that gods with pale faces, at whose head Quetzacoatl — the old legislator of Anahuac — would march, would some day come from the East; and the Mexicans believed that this day had arrived, — especially, as recent celestial and terrestrial phenomena had disquieted their minds. Soon convinced, however, that they had to deal

with men, and not with supernatural beings, they began a heroic struggle against the invaders, which, but for the weakness of their king, would probably have been crowned with victory. Enervated by luxury and excess, Moteuczoma was no longer the brave captain of the past. But it is not for us to relate these facts, which belong to modern history. We shall, however, complete the chronology of the Aztec kings in a few lines.

Moteuczoma died mysteriously, June 30, 1520, from the effects of a blow from a stone. Almost the day after his death, his subjects succeeded in vanquishing Cortez and driving him from Mexico; they followed him as far as the frontier of Tlaxcala. They then chose Cuitlahuatzin, a brother of the deceased, who was in command of the army, for king.

The new sovereign — a wise and very capable man, as even his enemies admit — immediately began to repair the fortifications of Mexico. He called the provinces to his aid, and tried to win over the Tlaxcaltecs, — convincing them that the Spaniards were men, and not demi-gods. Ever defeated, but always fighting, he died suddenly of smallpox, which, brought to Mexico by a negro belonging to Cortez's suite, caused terrible ravages at this time among the Indians. Cuitlahuatzin ("the eagle") was succeeded by Cuauhtemotzin, a son of Ahuitzotl.

The eleventh and last king of Mexico — the valiant Cuauhtemotzin ("descending eagle") —

defended his capital against Cortez with energy. Vanquished after sixty days of combat, he became the prisoner of the Spanish general. We know that the latter, wishing to wrest from him the secret of the place where he had concealed the treasures of the crown, smeared his feet with oil, and then had him hung above a brazier. The heroic reply of the last Aztec king to one of his lieutenants, who, subjected to the same punishment, was complaining of his lot, is well known: "And I," said the sovereign, — "perchance I am on a bed of roses?" Cortez ordered the torture to be stopped, and then tried to gain the good-will of his victim, whom the Mexicans still regarded as king. Later, accused of conspiracy, Cuauhtemotzin, who had been left a cripple, was hanged by order of his conqueror.

The Aztec empire, so flourishing, did not, therefore, succumb solely — as we have already said — before the courage of the handful of soldiers who accompanied Cortez, nor even before the crushing superiority of their arms; it perished the victim of the peoples it had conquered or subjugated, and who, following the example of the Tlaxcaltecs, assisted the invaders with their courage and numbers. The glory of Cortez, so ready to profit by these hates and feuds, is not at all lessened by the demonstration of this fact; it shows him to have been, on the contrary, an astute politician as well as a valiant soldier.

Here ends the most arid part of the task we have undertaken, and the dryness of which we have, perhaps in vain, attempted to lessen. From their very nature, the documents which tell the history of the Aztecs, that is, the ideographic paintings, do not and cannot present us with any of those pleasing tales, or those brilliant, heroic, or profound sayings which, under so many different aspects, give a glimpse of the seductive genius of the Greeks. Besides, women rarely appear in these annals. Does this indicate that, among the Aztecs, gravity of character, severity of manners, and, above all, the inferior condition of women, prevented them from having any share in public life? We believe not. Among the Mexicans, as among all the nations of the ancient world, woman, with her grace, her beauty, her delicacy, and passionate nature, must have played her usual part of corruption and civilization. But the imperfection of ideographic writing made it impossible to record any but the great facts of war, politics, or religion. Moreover, the priests dictated or wrote these annals; and these sanguinary ascetics troubled themselves little with the amorous weaknesses of men. From their hands the task of recording the history of the people of Anahuac passed into the hands of Catholic missionaries, and the latter, among the tales that were related to them, naturally suppressed those of which women were the principal characters; hence the daughters of

Eve have, so to speak, no history in the past of the New World.

We shall now treat of the religion, the government, and the arts cultivated by the Aztecs. In these new studies the barrenness of the subject will possibly be atoned for by the curiosity which cannot fail to be aroused by strange modes of action, often the very opposite of our own, and always very different from those of the ancient peoples of whom we generally read. Besides, the description of their political and private ethics, their customs and laws, gives the clearest idea of the intelligence, the dignity, and the wisdom, no less than of the sanguinary aberrations of the Aztec people. We have already learned enough of their race, too often confounded with that of the heroes of Fenimore Cooper, to comprehend that they could do something besides follow a trail, chase a buffalo (an animal unknown in the country subjugated by the Aztecs), or smoke the calumet, whose name and use was unknown to them.

CHAPTER VI.

Cosmogony. — The Four Ages of the Universe. — Aztec Mythology. — Teotl. — The Soul. — The Deluge. — The Gods.

BEFORE approaching the particular mythology of the Aztecs, it seems necessary to cast a rapid glance over the general beliefs of the Nahuatlacs in regard to the creation of the universe and of man. The reader is about to enter the regions of pure fable, and to hear tales that are sometimes childish; but these earliest ideas of primitive peoples on their origin and the origin of things are never without instruction; distant, dying, distorted echoes of what might have been, they none the less enlighten the mind with unexpected flashes, and give us glimpses of truth.

According to the Nahuatlacs, there existed, before the creation of the universe, a heaven, inhabited by Tonacatecuhtli and his wife Tonacacihuatl, who in time procreated four sons. The skin of the oldest, Tlatlauhquitezcatlipoca, was red; that of the second, Yayauhqui, black, and his instincts were evil; that of the third, Quetzacoatl, was white; while the youngest, Huitzilipochtli, was a mere skeleton covered with a yellow skin.

After six hundred years of idleness the gods resolved to act. They named Quetzacoatl and Huitzilipochtli as executors of their will; these thereupon created fire, and then a demi-sun. They afterwards created a man, Oxomoco, and a woman, Cipactonatl, whom they commanded to cultivate the ground with care. Cipactonatl, who was also required to spin and weave, was endowed with the gift of prophecy. As a reward for her oracles she was given grains of maize to serve as food for her descendants. The gods then made Mictlanteuctli and his companion, Mictlancihuatl, whom they appointed rulers of the infernal regions. This done, they divided time into days, months, and years.

Resuming their work, they created a first heaven, inhabited by two stars, one male, the other female; then a second which they peopled with Tetzahuacihuatl ("women skeletons"), intended to devour human beings when the end of the world came. In the third heaven they placed four hundred men, yellow, black, white, blue, and red. The fourth heaven served as a residence for birds, which thence descended to the earth; in the fifth, which was peopled with fiery serpents, comets and falling stars had their origin. The sixth was the empire of the wind, the seventh that of dust, and the eighth the abode of the gods. It was not known what existed between this one and the thirteenth, the residence of the immutable Tonacatecuhtli.

In this creation, water received a special organization; for the gods met to form Tlalocaltecuhtli and his wife Chalchiutlicue who became masters of the liquid element. In the dwelling inhabited by these two were four pools filled with different waters. The water of the first pool helped germination, that of the second withered the seed, the water of the third froze them, and that of the fourth dried them. Tlaloc, in his turn, created a multitude of small ministers charged with the execution of his orders. Furnished with an amphora and armed with a wand, these pygmies carried the water where the god directed them, and sprinkled it as rain. Thunder was produced whenever one of them broke his jar, and the lightning which struck men was nothing but a fragment of the shattered vessel. In the midst of the waters a great fish, called Cipactli, charged with sustaining and directing the earth, had been created.

The first woman bore a son; as he had no companion, the gods made him one out of a hair. The demi-sun illuminated the world imperfectly; hence Tezcatlipoca undertook the task of fashioning a complete star. The Nahuatlacs believe that the sun and moon wandered in space. The sun — a curious detail — traversed half the space open before him, and then retreated. His image in the west was only his reflection. Lastly the four gods created the giants, and then Huitzilipochtli's bones took on a covering of flesh.

Discord broke out among the creators. Quetzacoatl, with a blow of his stick, precipitated Tezcatlipoca into the water, where he was transformed into a tiger, and took his brother's place as sun. After a period of more than six hundred years, the great tiger Tezcatlipoca gave Quetzacoatl a blow with his paw, and precipitated him in turn from the heavens. The fall of the god produced such a wind that almost all mankind perished; those who survived were transformed into monkeys.

The quarrels of the gods took long to subside. Tezcatlipoca rained fire over the earth, Chalchiutlicue flooded it, and then it was necessary to repeople it. Whereupon Camaxtle-Huitzilipochtli, striking a rock with his stick, caused the Chichimec-Otomites, who had peopled the earth before the Aztecs, to come forth.

Let us pause here; nevertheless, as Orozco has judiciously remarked, these fables, absurd as they appear, contain astronomical, religious, and social myths. They show us the ideas of the peoples of Anahuac on the creation of the earth, and the relations which they imagined existed between it and the heavens. Like many other peoples, the Nahuatlacas were convinced that the conflict of the four elements, earth, air, fire, and water, had caused great cataclysms. In their fables we see the first intimation of the unity of God. Astronomy is originated; the human races with their typical colors are already classified. Domestic

arts appear with the maize given as a dowry to the first woman. In place of the Atlas of the Greeks, the columns of the Vedas, the elephants of the Hindoos, it is a whale that supports the world; but what a curious analogy! At last a nation appears; the Chichimecs rise up under the wand of a god striking a rock, and humanity springs into existence.

Now let us approach the special cosmogony, and afterwards the mythology, of the people whose past we are endeavoring to reconstruct.

The Aztec cosmogony, as well as their mythology, like that of all nations, is evidently primitive history altered by oral tradition, transformed by the imagination and symbolized. The gods of the Mexicans, like those of the Greeks, were great men, who were afterwards gradually deified. Thus, beyond all doubt, the famous god of the air, Quetzacoatl, had been a lawgiver; and Huitzilipochtli, the sanguinary Mars, who had those strangled on the altar whom he spared in battle, had been a famous warrior. A writer who should now endeavor to restore these figures of the past to historic truth would lose himself in hypotheses; therefore we shall not attempt it.

According to the ideographic paintings preserved at Rome, and known as the "Collection of the Vatican," the Aztecs believed that four suns, successively created by the will of a god, had illuminated the earth. The first of these stars, Atonathiu, or "sun of water," was afterwards ex-

tiuguished, whereupon a deluge was produced. The second, Ehecatonathiu, when he was dying, let loose a wind which nothing could withstand. The third, Tletonathiu, destroyed the earth by fire, and finally, the fourth, Tlatonathiu, by his creation produced the state of things we now see. Let us remark that the order in which these suns appeared has often been inverted, accordingly as the manuscripts consulted have been read from left to right or from right to left.

To resume: According to the Aztecs, who, however, borrowed this cosmogony from the peoples whom they had replaced in Anahuac, the human race had been annihilated at three different times, and the earth repeopled as often by couples who had escaped from the catastrophes. According to the approximate calculation of the epochs assigned to each of these destructions, our globe, flooded, devastated by the wind, then burned, would be about twenty thousand years old.

Although in a rather imperfect way, the Aztecs had the idea of a supreme being, independent and absolute. As they considered him invisible they never attempted to represent him by images; they designated him by the generic name of Teotl ("God"). This word, which resembles the Theos of the Greeks even more in meaning than in pronunciation, has caused learned discussions in regard to the origin of the people of the New World. It is, however, merely a curious

coincidence, from which no inference can be drawn.

To paint the greatness of this supreme God, the Aztecs used the most expressive epithets. Thus they called him Ipalnemoani ("he who gives us life"), or Tloque-nahuaque ("he who embraces everything"). But the knowledge of this supreme divinity disappeared before a multitude of secondary gods, engendered by superstition. Let us observe that an evil spirit, named Tlacatecolotl ("the reasoning owl"), the enemy of the human race, was opposed to Teotl. In the beliefs of the Aztecs, this spirit allowed himself to be seen by men only to terrify them or do them some injury; he filled the place of the Satan of the Christians.

The Aztecs, like the other nations of Anahuac on the way towards civilization, believed in the existence of the soul and regarded it as immortal. However, as is shown by their funeral rites, they accorded the same attribute of immortality to the principle which animates all living beings. In their belief three principal places served as a refuge for souls separated from the bodies they had inhabited. The soul of the soldier killed in battle, that of the prisoner sacrificed by the enemy, and that of the woman who died in the pains of childbirth, were transported to the dwelling of the sun, to there enjoy a delightful existence. Each morning these souls celebrated the rising of the star by hymns, dances, and concerts; they

accompanied it as far as the zenith. Then souls of women having come to meet him, in turn escorted the god until his setting with the same demonstrations of joy. After four years of this "glorious" life, the souls animated the clouds, as birds, with harmonious voices and brilliant plumage; free to rise in the depths of heaven or to descend to the earth to sing or to taste the nectar of the flowers. These last privileges the Tlaxcaltecs accorded only to the souls of nobles, which, besides animating the bodies of richly-plumed singing-birds, vivified those also of quadrupeds endowed with generous instincts. As to the souls of plebeians, they sought refuge in the bodies of beetles or other animals of low organization. The Pythagorean doctrine of transmigration, therefore, had partisans in the New World in the sixth century.

The souls of those who were killed by lightning, drowned, or who died in consequence of tumors, dropsy, wounds, etc., as well as the souls of children sacrificed to Tlaloc, god of the waters, took their flight to a cool and agreeable place named Tlalocan, where they enjoyed varied pleasures and were fed on delicious dishes. In the heart of the great temple of Mexico there was a place reserved in which, on a certain day of the year, all the souls of children met. Finally, a hell, called Mictlan, served as a residence for the god Mictlanteuctli and for his substitute, the goddess Mictlancihuatl. In this hell, situated

in the centre of the earth, the souls underwent but one pain, — terrible for people accustomed to the splendors of the tropical sun, — that of living in darkness.

The Aztecs preserved traditions regarding the creation of the world, a universal flood, the confusion of tongues, and the dispersion of men over the surface of the globe; facts represented in a great number of their hieroglyphic paintings. They related that the first inhabitants of the earth having been drowned by incessant rains, a single man, named Coxcox, and a woman called Teocipatli, had been able, like Noah, to save themselves in a boat, and that they had landed near the mountain of Colhuacan. The two fugitives afterwards had many children, all of whom were born dumb, and who remained so, until one day, a dove from the top of a tree taught each of them a different language.

Next to Teotl, the principal god of the Aztecs was called Tezcatlipoca ("shining mirror"); his images always represented him holding one of these articles in his hands. He was also called "soul of the world," for he was regarded as the creator of heaven and earth, as the master of all things, as Providence. He was personified under the features of a young man; for time had no effect on him, and for this reason he was called Telpuctli. He was the god who rewarded the just, and who punished evil-doers by afflicting them with disease. Under the name of Necoc-

Yaotl ("sower of discord"), he went about among men and induced them to destroy one another. At the corners of streets in cities, stone seats ornamented with plants existed, intended to serve him as a place of rest, seats on which it was forbidden to sit. He was said to have descended from heaven by means of a spider's thread. On his arrival upon earth he had fought with Quetzacoatl, a high-priest of the kingdom of Tollan, — who was himself later placed among the gods, — and had pursued and driven him from Anahuac.

The principal image of Tezcatlipoca (fig. 7), richly decorated, was made of teotetl ("divine stone"), a kind of brilliant black marble. His ears were ornamented with golden rings, and from his lower lip hung a tube of crystal, enclosing a green or blue feather, simulating a precious stone. His hair was bound with a gold cord, to which hung an ear of the same metal, an emblem of the prayer of the afflicted. His breast was covered with massive gold, and his arms bore bracelets of the same metal. An emerald represented his navel, and in his left hand he held a golden fan ornamented with many-colored feathers in the form of a mirror, by the aid of which he saw what was passing on the earth. At times, to symbolize his justice, he was represented seated on a bench, wrapped in a mantle of red cloth, on which were embroidered skulls and human bones. On these occasions he held a shield and four

arrows in his left hand, while his right hand was raised in the act of throwing a dart. His entire body was painted black, and his head was crowned with partridge feathers.

FIG. 7.—TEZCATLIPOCA. TERRA-COTTA FOUND IN NAHUALAC BY M. CHARNAY. (MUSEUM OF TROCADERO.)

As a curiosity, we give a prayer that was addressed to Tezcatlipoca by his devotees, and which seems to be a paraphrase of the Lord's

Prayer. This prayer is quoted, without comment, both by Sahagun and Torquemada.

"Mighty God, thou who givest me life and whose slave I am, grant me the supreme grace of giving me meat and drink; grant me the enjoyment of thy clemency, that it may support me in my labors and my wants. Have pity on me who live sad, poor, and abandoned, and since I serve thee by sweeping thy temple, open to me the hands of thy mercy."

Ometeuctli ("twice lord") and Omecihuatl ("twice woman") were divinities who, in heaven, inhabited an enchanted city, the abode of all the pleasures. From there they watched over the world, Ometeuctli being charged with giving to men their inclinations, and Omecihuatl presided over those of women. It was said that the latter, already the mother of many children, gave birth to a flint knife, which her indignant sons hurled down to the earth. In falling, the knife gave birth to sixteen hundred demi-gods. The latter, finding no one to serve them, — the earth had just been depopulated by a scourge, — sent an embassy to their mother to ask the gift of creating men. The goddess replied that, if their thoughts had been worthy of their origin, they would have come to live with her. It being granted that they preferred to live on the earth, they should have recourse to Mictlanteuctli, god of the infernal regions, to obtain human bones, which they should sprinkle with their blood, and

from which would be born a man and a woman who would increase and multiply. Omecihuatl enjoined them to mistrust the god of the infernal regions, who, after having yielded to their demand, might repent of his complaisance. Following the advice of his mother, one of the demi-gods, Xolotl, descended to the centre of the earth. Having obtained what he wanted, he departed running. Rendered suspicious by this flight, Mictlanteuctli pursued him; but not being able to overtake him, he returned to his empire.

In his precipitate flight, Xolotl fell and broke the bone he was carrying into a great many pieces of unequal size. He gathered the pieces together and rejoined his brothers; then, the precious fragments having been placed at the bottom of a vase, each of the demi-gods sprinkled them with his blood. On the fourth day a boy was born, and on the seventh day a girl, children whom Xolotl fed with the juice of the thistle. The custom, so common among the nations of Anahuac, of frequently bleeding themselves from various parts of the body, sprung from this tradition. The difference noticeable in the height of men was explained to the minds of the Aztecs by the unequal size of the fragments of the broken bone.

Ometeuctli was also called Citlatonac, and Omecihuatl, Citlaticue.

Among the goddesses of Mexican mythology the principal was Cihuacohuatl ("woman-serpent").

It was said she was the first woman that had brought forth children, and that she invariably bore twins. She often showed herself to men, always richly clothed and carrying a cradle in which reposed a new-born child; this apparition presaged a calamity. The Aztecs looked upon tobacco as an incarnation of this goddess.

The sun and the moon were deified by the Aztecs under the names of Tonathiu and Meztli respectively. The human race having been restored in the manner related, all the demi-gods had their servants and partisans. But the primitive sun having become extinct, they assembled at Teotihuacan around a great fire, and declared to their servants that the one among them who would throw himself into the brazier would be transformed into a sun. Immediately a man more intrepid than his comrades, Nanahuatzin, cast himself into the flames and went down into hell. Those present remained in a state of suspense, anxious to know in what part of the heavens the new sun would appear. At last the star appeared in the east, and scarcely had he risen above the horizon, when he stood still. The demi-gods urged him to continue his course, and the sun replied that he would do so when they were all dead. This response filled them with consternation; one of them, named Citli, angrily seized his bow and shot an arrow towards the sun, which the latter escaped by bowing down. Citii cast two more arrows with no better success.

Irritated in turn, the sun hurled one of the darts at the assailant and fixed it in his forehead, inflicting a wound from which the audacious man died.

Terrified by the misfortune that had befallen their brother, and unable to struggle against the sun, the demi-gods resolved to die by the hand of Xolotl, who, after opening the breasts of all the rest, killed himself.

Mankind were overcome with sorrow at the death of their masters. But soon the god Tezcatlipoca commanded one of them to betake himself to the abode of the sun to inform him that a bridge of whales and tortoises would be built for the voyage he was to undertake over the sea. The god himself taught the messenger a song, which the latter was to sing during his mission. Thence, according to the Aztecs, came not only the discovery of music, but also their custom of celebrating the feast of their gods with songs and dances. On the other hand, must not the origin of the human holocausts, so common among the ancient Mexicans, be sought for in the frightful immolation of his brothers made by Xolotl?

A fable very much like the one related concerning the birth of the sun was current regarding that of the moon. Imitating the example of Nanahuatzin, a man had thrown himself into the fire lighted at Teotihuacan; but the flames having diminished in intensity, he came forth less brilliant than his predecessor, and was trans-

formed into a moon. On the plains of Teotihuacan still exist the ruins of the two temples commemorative of these old traditions, — one dedicated to the star of day, the other to that of night.

The god of air, among all the nations of Anahuac, was called Quetzacoatl, that is to say, "serpent decked with feathers." It was related that he had been a high-priest of Tollan, and that he was a man with a white skin, a high stature, a broad forehead, large eyes, long, black hair, and a bushy beard. For propriety's sake he always wore ample garments; he was so rich that he possessed palaces of silver and fine stones. Industrious, he had invented the arts of smelting metals and of working stone. The laws which he had given men proved his knowledge, and his austere life his wisdom. When he wished to promulgate a law he sent a hero whose voice could be heard a hundred leagues away, to proclaim it from the summit of Tzatzitepetl ("mountain of clamors").

In the time of Quetzacoatl (fig. 8), maize attained such enormous dimensions that a single ear was all a man could carry. Gourds measured not less than four feet, and it was no longer necessary to dye cotton, because all colors were produced by nature. The other products of the earth naturally attained dimensions similar to those of Indian corn; singing-birds and birds of brilliant plumage abounded. All men were then rich.

In a word, the Aztecs believed that the reign of Quetzacoatl had been the golden age of the country they inhabited.

FIG. 8. — QUETZACOATL. AZTEC STATUETTE OF TERRA-COTTA, FOUND NEAR MEXICO. (MUSEUM OF TROCADERO.)

Like the Saturn of the Greeks, with whom we may compare him, the god of Toltec origin abandoned his country. When its prosperity was at its height, Tezcatlipoca, for some unknown

reason, appeared to him in the form of an old man, and revealed to him that the will of the gods ordained that he should betake himself to the kingdom of Tlapallan. At the same time he offered him a beverage by means of which Quetzacoatl believed he might acquire immortality. But he had scarcely swallowed the draught when he was seized with such an irresistible desire to repair to Tlapallan that he immediately set out, escorted by a number of his followers, singing hymns. Near the village of Cuauhtitlan, Quetzacoatl threw a number of stones against a tree, which adhered to the trunk. Near Tlanepantla he placed his hand on a rock, which preserved the impression of it, — an imprint which the Mexicans showed to the Spaniards after the conquest.

Finally, when Quetzacoatl reached Cholula, the inhabitants of that city conferred the supreme power on him. The integrity of his life, the gentleness of his manners, his repugnance to every species of cruelty, won the hearts of the Cholulans. From him they learned how to smelt metals, — an art which afterwards rendered them celebrated. For a long time they obeyed the laws he gave them. To Quetzacoatl they attribute the rites of their religion and their knowledge of the division of time.

After a sojourn of twenty years at Cholula, Quetzacoatl resolved to continue his journey towards the imaginary city of Tlapallan, taking

with him four young nobles. Having arrived in the province of Goatzacoalco, he discharged his followers, and charged them to tell the Cholulans that he would shortly return to them. The Cholulans confided the government of their city to the mandatories of their benefactor, in memory of the friendship he had for them. Gradually the report of the death of Quetzacoatl spread; he was then proclaimed god by the Toltecs of Cholula, and afterwards declared protector of their city, in the centre of which they raised in his honor a high mountain, which they crowned with a temple. From Cholula, the worship of Quetzacoatl, venerated as the god of air, extended over the whole country. The Cholulans piously preserved for a long time certain small green stones, admirably carved, which they said had belonged to their favorite god. The kings of Yucatan gloried in their descent from Quetzacoatl. Singular devotions! — he it was to whom sterile women prayed for children; and robbers carried his image with them in their nocturnal expeditions. Quetzacoatl was supposed to control the god of the waters, — the wind, in all the countries in which he was worshipped, always preceding rain.

The most contradictory ideas have been current in regard to this divinity, who, now considered of celestial origin, and now regarded as a man who had acquired the immortality of the gods, seems in reality to be a union of several personages. It

is an incontestable fact that Quetzacoatl created a new religion, based on fasting, penitence, and virtue. He certainly belonged to a race other than the one he civilized; but what was his country? He died, announcing that he would return at the head of white-faced men; and we have seen that the Indians believed his prophecy fulfilled when the Spaniards landed on their shores. According to Sahagun, the most usual ornaments of the images of Quetzacoatl were a mitre spotted like the skin of a tiger, a short embroidered tunic, turquoise ear-rings, and a golden collar supporting fine shells. The legs of these images were encased in gaiters of tiger-skin, and on their feet were black sandals. A shield hung from the left arm, and in the right hand was a sceptre ornamented with precious stones, an emblem which terminated in a crook like a bishop's crosier.

The Aztec Neptune, called Tlaloc (fig. 9) or Tlalocateuctli, was at the same time master of paradise. He was given the title of "Fecundator of the Earth," and "Protector of Temporal Goods." It was thought that he lived on the summit of high mountains, in the regions where clouds were formed, and it was there people went to pray to him. Aztec historians relate that when the Alcolhuas arrived on the plateau of Anahuac, during the reign of Xolotl, first king of the Chichimecs, they found on the summit of Mount Tlaloc, an idol of this god cut in a light white stone; it represented a man seated on a square pedestal,

looking towards the east, having at his feet a vase, which was filled with Indian-rubber and all sorts of seeds. Every year this offering was renewed, in thankfulness for the harvests reaped. This statue, which was considered as the most ancient in the country, had been set up by the Toltecs. It remained at this place until the commencement of the sixteenth century, when Nezahualpilli, king of Alcolhuacan, wishing to secure the love of his subjects, replaced it with another carved out of very hard black stone. The new idol having been mutilated by lightning, and the priests having declared that this was a punishment from the god, the old image was restored, and it remained in place until destroyed by order of the first bishop of Mexico, Zumarraga, indignant at the number of children annually sacrificed to this stone figure, which he estimated in a letter at twenty thousand!

FIG. 9. — TLALOC. FOUND NEAR OAZACA. (MUSEUM OF TROCADERO.)

The most characteristic signs of the idols which

represent Tlaloc, are the round eyes surrounded with circles like spectacles. A piece of work in relief, in the form of mustaches, is placed above their mouth, and is sometimes prolonged into an

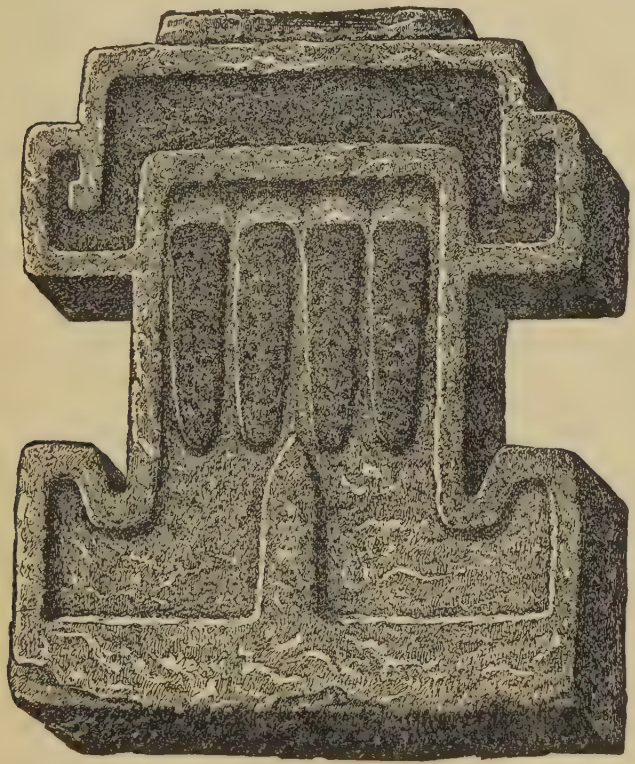


FIG. 10. — CROSS OF TLALOC. FOUND IN THE TOLTEC RUINS NEAR TEOTIHUACAN. (MUSEUM OF TROCADERO.)

appendage in the shape of a nose. From their opened lips teeth project, usually four in number, long, curved, and sharp. Their hands raised to the height of the head seem in the act of hurling

the thunder-bolt and letting loose the waters. The god at times brandishes a serpent, as an image of the lightning.

I have collected a great number of small figures of baked clay of this god in the grottos of the Sierra de Songolica, and on the crown bordered with pearls with which they are capped, is found the cross, whose presence on so many Mexican monuments so misled the old missionaries, and which is one of the emblems of Tlaloc, at times usurped by Quetzacoatl. The missionaries saw in this coincidence a proof that Christianity had already been preached to the Indians, and St. Thomas was looked upon as having discovered America before Columbus. In a learned and critical memoir on a cross found at Teotihuacan (fig. 10), Doctor Hamy has clearly shown how one of the emblems of Tlaloc, intended to represent rain, had gradually taken under the chisel of sculptors the form of the venerated sign of Christianity.

Modern historians claim it was not Tlaloc alone who lived in the mountains, but also a multitude of lesser gods, called Tlalocs. Nevertheless, the appellations Apozonalotl ("foamy wave"), Atlacamani ("tempestuous"), Ayau ("capricious wave"), etc., designate, I think, Tlaloc himself, qualified by names of the different states of the liquid which he ruled; these qualifications were likewise applied to his sister or his wife, the goddess Chalchiuitlicue.

In the ideographic manuscripts, the image of Tlaloc is painted green and azure, representing the various shades of water. It is armed with a golden wand twisted into a spiral, ending in a sharp point, in representation of a thunder-bolt. Tlaloc had a chapel on the top of the great temple of Mexico, as important as that of Huitzilipochtli, with which it was connected. Festivals in honor of this god were of frequent occurrence; on these occasions he was worshipped with strange ceremonies, and human sacrifices, especially of children. The cemetery recently discovered by M. Désiré Charnay, at an elevation of fifteen hundred feet, on one of the slopes of Popocatepetl, and in which only bones of children were found is considered by Doctor Hamy as the burial-place of the young victims sacrificed to Tlaloc.

On the day of the feast of the Tlalocs, the priests of these ministers of the god of the waters betook themselves to the lagoon of Citlatepetl, situated a few miles from Mexico, to cut the reeds for decorating the altar. On the way they had a right to seize the clothing and merchandise which was carried by those whom they met, even when it consisted of tribute for the king. On that day also, priests, who during the year had been remiss in their duties, were plunged into the water and held there until they lost consciousness.

The waters, as we have seen, were not entirely under the control of Tlaloc, but also under that of Chalchihuitlicue, designated by a number of

names descriptive of the various states of water. On Mount Tlascala, a peak about which are formed the storms that break upon the city of Puebla, a temple arose dedicated to this goddess, who was specially invoked on the day of the birth of infants.

Xiutecuhtli ("lord of the comets"), god of the year and of verdure, was at the same time god of fire, under the expressive designation of Izcozauhqui ("yellow or flame-colored face"). He was one of the most revered of the gods, and the first mouthful of all dishes, and the first swallows of all drink were offered to him, by throwing them into a brazier.

The goddess of the earth and of maize, Centeotl ("surrounded by other goddesses"), was also called Tonacayohua ("she who nourishes"). This Ceres was especially adored by the Totonacs, inhabitants of the shores of Vera Cruz, who regarded her as their principal protectress. On the summit of a mountain they erected an imposing temple to her, served by a number of priests, and in which the oracles were uttered. The Totonacs had a great affection for this divinity, who refused human sacrifices, and was contented with the immolation of quails, turtles, and rabbits. They believed that she defended them against the gods who demanded blood. In Mexico, on the occasion of the feast of Centeotl, the thresholds of the houses, from early morning, were sprinkled with blood which the

inmates were obliged to draw from their ears; besides this all the doors were ornamented with palms or reeds, — a custom which reminded the Spaniards of Palm Sunday. Although, among

FIG. 11. — CENTEOTL. STONE STATUE, FOUND IN THE VALLEY OF MEXICO. (MUSEUM OF TROCADERO.)

the Totonacs, Centeotl was content with offerings of flowers, fruits, and more especially of maize, the Aztec priests did not hesitate to sacrifice animals and human victims to her (fig. 11).

The earth, in its entirety, was deified by the Aztecs; they represented it under the form of an animal provided with mouths at every articulation, — mouths filled with blood. The earth, they said, devours and absorbs everything.

Mictlanteuctli ("god of hell"), of whom we have already spoken, and his sister or companion, Mictlancihuatl, were greatly honored. Nocturnal sacrifices were offered to them, and their high-priest painted his body black to fulfil his functions. As to the god of night, Xoalteuctli, he was confounded with Meztli ("the moon"), or with Xoaticitl ("goddess of the cradles"), who was invoked as the protector of the sleep of infants.

Huitzilipochtli, or Mexitli, the terrible god of war, whose name signifies "the left-handed warrior," was without contradiction the most honored divinity among the Aztecs, who, as we have seen, considered themselves as his special *protégés*. Some thought that this god was a pure spirit, others that he was of a human nature.

According to tradition, at Coatepec, a town near the old city of Tollan, lived a woman named Coatlicue, devoted to the worship of the gods. One day when, according to her custom, she was sweeping the temple, she saw fall from heaven a ball formed of feathers, which she picked up and preserved in her bosom, intending to use the feathers to decorate the altar. Her work ended, she in vain sought for the ball; at the same time

she felt herself big with child. Her pregnancy became perceptible, and was noticed by her sons. Although they did not doubt their mother's virtue, they dreaded the shame that would be reflected on them by her deliverance, and resolved to kill her. Coatlicue, having learned of the intentions of her sons, was seized with fear. When she was thus afflicted a voice came from her breast, which said to her: "Have no fear, mother, I will save you, with honor to you and glory to me." Nevertheless, her sons, urged thereto by their sister Coyolnauhqui, more excited than they, were preparing to commit the crime they had premeditated, when Huitzilipochtli was born, a shield in his left hand, a lance in his right hand, his head surmounted by a green plume, his face surrounded with blue rays, and his left leg ornamented with feathers. As soon as born he caused a serpent to appear, which, transformed into a torch, consumed Coyolnauhqui, as the most guilty. By the light of this torch the god rushed upon his brothers with such impetuosity that in spite of their efforts and their prayers all were massacred. These feats terrified those who witnessed them, and secured for the new-born the name of Tetzahuitl ("terror.")

The special protector of the Aztecs, Huitzilipochtli, according to their traditions, conducted them to the lakes in the midst of which they founded the city of Mexico. There they erected the immense temple which so excited the wonder

of the Spaniards, in which they placed a colossal statue of the fierce divinity. This statue, which was of wood, represented a man seated on a pedestal painted blue, to represent the sky, from each angle of which a serpent issued. The forehead

FIG. 12. — HUITZILIPOCHTLI. FROM A MANUSCRIPT. (NATIONAL LIBRARY.)

of the idol was of an azure tint, and his face was crossed from ear to ear by a band of the same color. On his head was placed a helmet, in the form of a bird, whose golden beak held a bunch of green feathers. Around the neck of this monstrous figure was a collar representing six human

hearts. In his right hand he held, like a sceptre, a waving serpent of a bluish color, and in the left a buckler fringed with yellow feathers, on which were five balls also made of feathers and arranged in the form of a cross. From the upper part of the shield proceeded four arrows, sent, they said, by heaven to the god as a reward for his terrible actions. His head was also sometimes surmounted by the head of a vulture or of a tiger (fig. 12).

On the body of the hideous statue were numerous images of animals, carved out of gold or precious stones, — ornaments each one of which had its special signification. The god was always hidden by a veil, as a sign of respect. When a war broke out the Aztecs hastened to implore his aid, and to him they sacrificed the largest number of human victims.

Besides one of his young brothers, Tlacahuepan-Cuexcotzin, who, like himself, presided over the affairs of war, Huitzilipochtli had a lieutenant named Paynal ("swift") charged with directing unexpected attacks, surprises, and assaults. In case of war, priests placed the image of this divinity on their shoulders, and went through all the streets of the city at a rapid pace. At the sight of him all the soldiers were required to take up arms immediately.

At the head of the gods considered as secondary in Aztec mythology was Xacateuctli or Yacatecutli, ("he who guides,") who presided over

commerce. The Aztec merchants, who were very numerous and well organized, feasted him twice a year with sacrifices and banquets.

The god of the chase, Mixcoatl ("cloudy serpent,") was specially worshipped by the Otomites, who lived in the forests, and were almost all hunters. Nevertheless, this god had two temples in the city of Mexico, and wild animals were sacrificed to him.

Opochtli ("left hand") was the god of fishing. He was regarded as the inventor of the line and other things used in catching fish. At Cuitlahuac, a city situated on a small island of Lake Chalco, he was worshipped under the name of Amimitl.

The numerous salt-works that are still found around Mexico occupied a great many workmen, who had Huixtocihuatl, goddess of salt, for their protectress, and to whom they sacrificed young girls.

A singular fact, — it was a woman, the goddess Tlapotlazenan, who presided over the art of healing. The discovery of the principal medicines in use was attributed to her, and above all the discovery of uxitl, a sort of terebinthine, which served as a base for ointments.

Tezcatzoncatl, god of wine, was designated under many names, descriptive of the effects of the intoxicating liquor he had invented. He was called Tequechmecaniani ("he who strangles") or Teotlahuiani, ("he who submerges"). In the city of Mexico alone there were three hundred

priests consecrated to his worship. On the day specially dedicated to him the priest charged with representing him put on white sandals, dressed his hair with feathers of the heron, and ornamented the cloak that covered his shoulders with small shells.

Ixtlilton ("black face"), called also Tlatetecuin ("he who strikes or digs out the earth"), seems to have presided over medicine. Fathers carried their sick children into his temple, and made them dance before the idol, dictating prayers to them which they had to recite to be cured. After this ceremony the children drank a liquor prepared by the priests.

Coatlicue or Coatlantona ("skirt with the viper"), goddess of flowers, was probably the mother of Huitzilipochtli. Gardeners at the beginning of spring offered her garlands of flowers skilfully arranged, — a charming art in which the Indians still excel.

Tlazolteotl ("goddess of trickery"), was also called Ixcuina and Tlaelquani. She was the divinity invoked by evil-doers, to obtain not only pardon for their faults, but also to escape the infamy that might result therefrom. Her priests, in the name of Tezcatlipoca, had the right to accord absolute pardon to the guilty who came to confess their faults or their crimes to them; this was a sort of auricular confession. The penitent had to avoid falling again into the same sin for which he had been absolved, for

Tezcatlipoca pardoned the same fault but once. The goddess Tlazolteotl and her four sisters, Tiacapan, Teicu, Tlaco and Xocoyotzin, corresponded to the unchaste Venus of the ancients.

Xipetotec (" bald " or " the flayer "), was the god of goldsmiths. He was venerated all the more as he revenged himself on those who neglected his worship, by afflicting them with headaches and diseases of the eyes, to say nothing of the itch. Victims intended for his altars were dragged by the hair, and his devotees wrapped themselves up in the skin of the men flayed during his festivals. This it seems was a threat addressed to those who stole gold or silver, and who were punished in this terrible manner.

Napateuctli (" four times lord "), had a chapel, — two, according to Sahagun, — in the great temple of Mexico. He was the protector of mat-makers. He was said to be good, liberal, and always ready to pardon injuries; he was one of the ministers of Tlaloc.

Omacatl or Omeacatlomacatl (" two reeds "), was the god of rejoicing, a sort of Comus. He assisted, at least by his image, at the banquets given by the great lords. On these occasions the idol consecrated to this god was borrowed from the temple and placed in the midst of the guests. To neglect doing this would have been to expose one's self to misfortune.

Tonantzin (" our mother ") seems to be the goddess Cihuacoatl. Her temple was near a hill

two miles from Mexico. The chapel of Notre-Dame de Guadeloupe, the virgin that appeared to the Indian Juan Diego, and whom the modern Mexicans have adopted as a patroness, now stands on almost the same spot, and is the most celebrated Catholic sanctuary of the New World. Until 1853 the clergy permitted the Indians, clothed as they were in the time of Moteuczoma, to dance even in the interior of the chapel. Some time later the Archbishop of Mexico decided to forbid these diversions, which were formerly indulged in in honor of Tonantzin. But the Indians are tenacious of their customs; driven from the church they now dance in the enclosure.

Teoteoinan, as indicated by the meaning of the Aztec word, was the mother of the gods; the washerwomen invoked her under the name of Tecitzin.

Let us end this long list by mentioning Hamateuctli ("old lady") protectress of aged women; and then the Teopictons, household gods that were represented by small figures. The kings were obliged to have six of these idols in their palaces, the nobles four, and the plebeians two. On the roads and streets of cities these images were seen by hundreds.

Besides the gods we have just enumerated, Mexican mythology reckoned two hundred and sixty others, to whom as many days of the year were consecrated. The names of the days of the

first thirteen months of the Aztec calendar are also those of secondary divinities.

The other nations of Anahuac worshipped almost the same gods as the Mexicans, but not always in the same manner. Thus Huitzilipochtli was the principal god in Mexico, Quetzacoatl in Cholula, Centeotl among the Totonacs, and Mixcoatl among the Otomites. The Tlaxcaltecs, rivals of the Aztecs, nevertheless adored the same gods; but among them Huitzilipochtli bore the name of Camaxtle.

In Mexican mythology, there are some examples of metamorphosis. Thus it was related that a man named Xapan, having resolved to do penance upon a mountain, was tempted by a woman and committed adultery. He was immediately beheaded by Xaotl, whom the gods had charged to watch over his conduct. Not content with this punishment, Xaotl followed the woman, who was transformed into a scorpion. The gods, then judging that their agent had overstepped his authority, metamorphosed him in turn into a grasshopper. The Aztecs attributed the custom — well known to naturalists — which the scorpion has of hiding under stones and fleeing from the light, to shame on account of the crime which had cost him his transformation.

Among the Aztecs the images of the gods are hideous, and generally disfigured by a fantastic symbolism, intended to produce an impression of dread. The work of a cultivated people, but still

barbarous from an artistic point of view, the statues of the Aztec gods are chaste in attitude and always clothed. They bear the impress of severe, rude, and melancholy imaginations, not willing to sacrifice to the sensual refinements of civilization and seeking to inspire respect by terror.

Have the names and worship of the gods from whom we have just brushed the dust completely disappeared from the memory of the modern Aztecs? Do none of them remember the blood shed by their ancestors before the grinning images whose ruins now fill our museums? In a word, is the past dead in their memory, and has the new religion which has been forced upon them by the strong hand of the Spaniard completely effaced from their minds the redoubtable divinities formerly so highly venerated? For those who have lived among them everything indicates that it has. Teotihuacan is a desert, and its forests, already venerable, cover the mountains on whose summits proud statues of Tlaloc, of Tezcatlipoca, and of Centeotl were raised long ago. And still, in grottos unexpectedly discovered, I have frequently found myself in the presence of a figure of Mictlanteuctli, at the foot of which a recent offering of food had been placed. Were these offerings a piece of homage to a proscribed god, or those of a modern wizard to the devil of the Christians? The Indian is mute when questioned on these matters, and the imagination is free to adopt either interpretation.

CHAPTER VII.

THE IDOLS. — WORSHIP. — THE GREAT TEMPLE OF MEXICO. — LESSER TEMPLES. — PRIESTS AND PRIESTESSES. — RELIGIOUS ORDERS.

THE number of idols worshipped in the temples, in the houses, on the roads, and in the forests of Anahuac was so large that Zumarraga, the first bishop of Mexico, declares that the monks of St. Francis alone destroyed more than twenty thousand of them in the space of eight years. The greater part of these idols were of terra cotta, wood, or granite; sometimes, however, they were made of gold, or even carved out of precious stones. Benedito Fernandez, the celebrated Dominican friar, found on a mountain of Achiotla in Miztec, a small idol called the "heart of the people." It was a magnificent emerald, four fingers in length, and two in breadth, bearing the image of a bird in the coils of a serpent. The Spaniards offered the zealous missionary fifteen hundred piastres for the jewel; but he, seeing only the work of the devil in it, refused to sell it, and broke it before the Indians. In enumerating the principal gods, we have described the manner in which they were represented. Death ("Miquiztli"), who does not seem to have been deified by

the Aztecs, was adored nevertheless, and was represented as a monster ready to seize an invisible prey (fig. 13).

All the peoples of Anahuac worshipped their gods by touching the soil with the middle finger of the right hand, and carrying to the mouth the dust that adhered to it, and also by prostrations, fasts, and other austerities. They addressed their prayers to them, bending down with the face turned towards the east; the door of the temples, therefore, always faced the west.

FIG. 13. — MIQUIZTLI. A STATUE FOUND NEAR TEHUACAN, OF WHICH THERE IS A CAST IN THE MUSEUM OF TROCADERO.

The Aztecs called the gods to witness their veracity, the form of their oath being "Perchance, is not the eye of God upon me?" At such times, they touched the earth with the right hand, and afterwards kissed it. The oath was of great value in tribunals, for it was believed that no one would be rash enough to invoke the name of the gods untruthfully.

The Aztecs, wherever they stopped during their long wanderings, built a sacred hut in which to shelter and worship their tutelary divinity, Huitzilipochtli; and we have seen that this was one of their first cares when they founded Mexico. The humble reed hut, in time, became an important edifice, around which were grouped other buildings, intended for the secondary gods. The temples were designated by the generic names of Teopan and of Teocalli ("houses of God"), names which their descendants now apply to the Catholic churches.

Itzacoatl, during his reign, transformed the rustic asylum into an imposing edifice, which his successor, Moteuczoma Ilhuicamina, in turn modified, embellished, and enlarged. Finally, Ahuitzotl completed the vast edifice his predecessor Tizoc had begun, and which the Spaniards lauded so greatly after they had destroyed it.

There are no documents to establish the exact dimensions of this Teocalli, for the four historians who had visited and described it, — Cortez, Bernal Diaz del Castillo, the anonymous Conqueror, and Sahagun, — speak of it with flagrant contradictions. According to their accounts, verified by Clavigero, the following may be considered as the truth.

Built in the middle of the city, this vast edifice, which had the form of a truncated pyramid, covered, with the temples annexed, all the space now occupied by the cathedral of Mexico, — the great

square and the adjoining streets. The wall, sculptured with intertwined serpents, which surrounded it, formed a square, according to Cortez, large enough to contain a village of five hundred houses. Made of stone and mortar, this wall, which was very broad, was surmounted with battlements, and furnished with four gates facing the four cardinal points. A broad road extended from the eastern gate to Lake Tezcoco. The other three gates opened upon the three principal streets of the city, which were long and broad, and which extended, by means of the causeways constructed over the lake, as far as the villages of Iztapalapan, Tacuba, and Tepejacac. Each of these gates was ornamented with stands of offensive and defensive arms. In case of necessity, soldiers repaired there to arm themselves.

The interior court enclosed by this wall was paved with stones so highly polished that the horses of the Spaniards could not venture into it without running the risk of falling. In the middle of this court arose the vast truncated pyramid, having according to some the form of a parallelogram, according to others that of a square. This pyramid, covered with bricks, was composed of five steps of equal height, but not of equal length or width, for the higher were narrower than the lower. The first step, the base of the edifice, about fifteen feet high, measured three hundred feet from east to west, and about two hundred and fifty from north to south. The second was

smaller than the first by about ten feet, and the others diminished in the same proportion. In consequence of this construction each step was bordered by an open space, on which three or four men could walk abreast.

The stairway of this edifice, placed on the exterior, on the southern side, was composed of a hundred and thirty steps a foot in height. This stairway was, however, not continuous. The first twenty steps passed, it was necessary to go around the sort of corridor we have just described to reach those leading to the second floor; and so on. This opinion has, however, been seriously questioned.

Having reached the top of this singular monument, — a flat place so large that five hundred Mexican nobles were able to fortify themselves there and defend themselves against the troops of Cortez, — two towers, fifty feet high, composed of three stories, could be seen on the eastern side. The first of these stories was composed of stone and mortar, the other two of wood artistically carved. In the story made of stone was what may be called the sanctuary; and there, on an altar five feet high, the protecting divinities were arranged in a row. One of these sanctuaries was consecrated to Huitzilipochtli and the gods of war, the other to Tlaloc. The higher stories served as storage-rooms for the utensils used in the ceremonies; the ashes of the kings and of many high dignitaries were deposited there.

The doors of the sanctuaries opened towards the west, and the two towers terminated in wooden cupolas. The total height of the edifice, at the base of which two statues of stone held torches that were always kept burning, must have been one hundred and twenty feet. From the top of the towers a part of the valley of Mexico could be seen, presenting a view of marvellous beauty.

The space between the grand temple and the surrounding wall was reserved for sacred dances; the rest was occupied by more than sixty important buildings, — Sahagun enumerates seventy-eight, — and the different stones erected for sacrifices: techcatls, temalacatls and teocuauhxicallis. Among the most important secondary temples we must rank those of Tezcatlipoca, Tlaloc, and Quetzacoatl. These edifices, whose façades were turned towards the principal temple, were not of the same size. The temple of Quetzacoatl, instead of being a parallelogram, was circular. Its entrance represented the mouth of a serpent, with fangs, and the Spaniards dreaded to cross its threshold.

One of the temples, called Ilhuicatitlan ("near the sky"), was dedicated to the planet Venus. In the temple a pillar was erected, on which was painted or carved a representation of that star. Near this column, when the planet appeared in the heavens, prisoners were sacrificed.

Among the number of edifices grouped in the immense enclosure we must mention five colleges

for priests and three seminaries, buildings occupied by a large number of people devoted to the worship of the gods. Next came the Epcoatl ("pearl and serpent"), the temple of the ministers of Tlaloc and of the inferior divinities of the waters; the Macuicalli ("five houses"), in which spies caught in Mexico were cut in pieces; the Tlalxico ("navel of the earth"), dedicated to Mictlanteuctli; the Iztaccinteutl ("white corn"), a temple in which victims afflicted with leprosy were sacrificed; the Tlelatiloyan, an excavation in which the skins of flayed victims were deposited.

We must mention an arsenal, situated near the temple Tezcacalli ("house of mirrors"), where the idols of Omacatl, god of banquets, were kept; also another edifice, dedicated to the moon and called Tecucizcalli ("house of shells"), which was covered with the shells of mollusks. It was near a chapel designated by the name of Quauxicalco ("heads of gourds"), a place filled with skulls, to which the kings repaired to fast and pray. A second retreat, Poyautlan ("dark place"), was used by the high-priest; and many others were set aside for special officers, or reserved for lodgings for people of distinction from the provinces who were attracted to Mexico by ambition, devotion, or curiosity.

To a pond called Tezcaapan ("water mirror") numbers of devotees came to bathe, in fulfilment of vows. Among the fountains or springs within the sacred enclosure was one, the water

of which could be drunk only during solemn feasts. Around the temples were aviaries, where birds intended for the sacrifices were raised, and also large gardens, where plants remarkable for the beauty or perfume of their flowers were cultivated, to be used in the decoration of the altars. Finally, a small artificial wood, interspersed with hills, lakes, and rocks, was used as a sacred hunting-ground.

Among the chambers in the great temple, where the images of the gods and the implements used in their worship were kept, were two immense rooms, whose proportions surprised the Spaniards. But the building that appeared to be the most singular to them, was a vast prison constructed in the form of a cage, in which were placed the idols of conquered nations.

Numbers of ossuaries attracted the attention of the conquerors. In some (*Cuauxicalli*) the bones were simply piled up; in the others (*Tzompatli*) the skulls, arranged so as to form symmetrical figures, were incrusted in the walls, with the faces projecting therefrom; they presented a spectacle even more repulsive than curious.

The largest of these places, situated, according to some writers, outside of the wall surrounding the temple, and according to others, but a short distance from its main entrance and immediately in front of it, consisted of a large truncated pyramid, one hundred and fifty-four feet square at its base. On its top, which was reached by a flight of thirty

steps, posts were placed at a distance of four feet from one another; these posts were bored with holes throughout their whole length, in which horizontal bars were inserted, which were laden with skulls. On the steps other skulls appeared between the stones, and at the top of the edifice two towers arose made of skulls and mortar. Whenever one of these funereal ornaments began to decay, the priests hastened to replace it, to keep up the symmetry of the whole. The skulls exposed in these different buildings were so numerous that Andrès de Tapia relates that having counted those that were found on the steps and on the top of the great Tzompatli, he stopped at the figure of 136,000.

Doctor Hamy has shown, in a recent work of his on these frightful edifices, that Mexico possessed five of them, — the Mixcoapan-Tzompatli, where the heads of victims sacrificed to Mixcoatl were placed; the Huei-Tzompatli, which has just been described; the Yopico-Tzompatli, in which were arranged the skulls of victims sacrificed during the feast of the month Tlacaxipehualitztli; and finally, that of the victims offered to the god of the merchants.

Besides the temples just enumerated there were others at different parts of the city. According to many authors the number was not less than two thousand; they were surmounted by three hundred and sixty towers. Of this number, ten were remarkable on account of their size,

particularly that of Tlatelolco, consecrated to Huitzilipochtli.

Outside of the capital, where, according to Torquemada, all the religious edifices were constructed — except as to their dimensions — upon the model of the great Teocalli of Mexico, the most celebrated temples were those of Tezcoco, Cholula, and Teotihuacan. Bernal Diaz, who had the curiosity to count the steps leading to their summits, found that the temple of Tezcoco had one hundred and seventeen, and that of Cholula one hundred and twenty. The great temple of Cholula, as well as a number of other temples of that city, was dedicated to Quetzacoatl. Cortez, in one of his letters to the Emperor Charles V., states that from a hill overlooking the city, he had counted four hundred towers belonging to religious edifices. Now nothing remains in this place but the celebrated pyramid built by the Toltecs, which, like a number of constructions of this class, is falsely attributed to the Aztecs.

Near Teotihuacan, thirty miles from Mexico, may be seen the half-buried ruins of two temples, which served as models for the construction of all those of the country. In one of these the sun was worshipped; in the other, the moon. These two heavenly bodies were represented by figures in stone, of gigantic size and covered with gold. The idol of the sun had a cavity in the breast, in which a massive golden image of that body was

placed. The Spaniards seized the precious metal and broke the figures.

Around these two structures were numerous hillocks which the Indians say were temples consecrated to the stars. It was on account of the number of these religious monuments that this place was formerly called Teotihuacan. Torquemada, in his "History of the Indian Monarchies," places the number of temples in the territory of Anahuac at forty thousand, without including the altars built on mountain-tops, in the heart of forests, or on the highways, for the purpose of exciting the devotion of travellers, and of honoring the rural deities.

The revenues of the great temple of Mexico and of the other temples of the empire were very large; each of them owned land, and serfs for its cultivation. The products of these lands served for the support of the priests; they also furnished wood, which was used in large quantities in the sacrifices. The major-domos, themselves priests, often visited these domains, and those who cultivated them, far from complaining of their serfdom, considered themselves fortunate in being able to contribute, by their exertions, to the service of the gods, and to the welfare of their ministers. Besides the resources already mentioned, there were the first fruits of the crops, offered to obtain rain or good weather, the spontaneous gifts of the cities. Near each temple were storehouses for the preservation of provisions given to the

priests. The surplus was distributed among the poor.

The multiplicity of the Mexican gods required a great number of priests, who were almost as highly venerated as the divinities they served. When we remember that the great temple of Mexico sheltered at least five thousand, and that four hundred were engaged in the worship of Tezcatzoncatl, the Aztec Bacchus, we may believe the historians when they place the total number at a million. The honors that were paid the priests, the respect that was shown them, induced young men to enter the sacerdotal state. The nobles consecrated their children to the service of the gods for a stated time, and their example was followed by the lesser nobility, who accepted subordinate positions. To serve the gods was, among the Aztecs, to honor one's caste, and at the same time to acquire a sign of distinction.

The priests were separated from each other by several hierarchical degrees. The first of the supreme pontiffs — there were two of them — bore the title of Teoteuctli ("divine lord"), and the second that of Hueiteopixqui ("high-priest") These two dignities were conferred only on persons illustrious by birth, or on account of their probity, or their knowledge of the religious ceremonies.

The high-priests were oracles, whom the kings consulted at critical times, and war was never undertaken without their consent. It was they

who consecrated kings, and who tore the heart from the human victims in the sacrifices. The high-priest of Mexico was the head of religion throughout the empire; but the nations conquered by the Aztecs, with a political genius not inferior to that of the Romans on this point, preserved their own worship.

The dignity of pontiff was conferred by election; but it is not known whether the electors were priests or the nobles charged with the election of the kings. In Mexico the badge of this dignity consisted of a tuft of cotton attached to the breast. During the feasts the emblems of the divinity that was being honored were worn on the luxurious vestments of the high-priest.

Next to the two priestly dignities just mentioned, the highest was that of Mexitliteohuatzin, which the high-priest conferred. The duty of this minister consisted in supervising the observance of the rites and the forms in religious feasts. At the same time he watched over the conduct of the priests placed at the head of seminaries, for the purpose of punishing those who neglected their duties. On account of his complicated functions he was assisted by two aids, or vicars, one of whom held the office of superior-general of seminaries. As a badge, the first of these vicars always carried a bag of incense on his person.

Next in the hierarchical order came the Tlatquimilolteuctli, or steward of the sanctuary; then

the composer of hymns sung during the feasts, the Ometochtli. The ordinary priests were designated by the name of Teopixqui ("minister of God"), a term which to-day is applied to Catholic priests. In each quarter of Mexico a principal priest directed the feasts and religious acts.

Among the priests there were still others, called sacrificers, diviners, and chanters; of these last, some served during the day and others at night. Next came those charged with cleaning the temple, ornamenting the altars, educating the young, regulating the calendar, and finally with the production of mythological paintings.

Four times a day — in the morning, at midday, in the evening, and at midnight — the priests were required to incense the altars. At this last hour the most important ministers of the temple came to assist the one that was keeping watch. They burned incense to the sun four times during the day, and five times during the night. The perfumes employed were liquid styrax (*liquidambar styraciflua*), and copal resin (*rhus copallina*). At certain festivals they used chapopotli, — a sort of bitumen which was collected on the shore of the Gulf of Mexico, and which seems to come from submarine volcanoes. The censers were made of clay, or at times of gold, provided with a handle, and were similar in form to our saucepans. Every morning the priests painted their bodies black with soot, and on this they traced designs with yellow or red ochre. At evening

they all bathed in pools within the enclosure of the temples.

The ordinary dress of the Aztec priests resembled that of the other citizens, with the exception of the black cotton cap which they wore. During the ceremonies they wore a sort of mantle. They allowed their hair to grow; sometimes it descended to their feet. They tied it up with ribbons, or left it unconfined and daubed it with colors, which gave them a hideous appearance.

Besides the paintings with ochre, they prepared others for the sacrifices that took place on mountain-tops or in dark grottos. Taking scorpions, spiders, worms, small vipers, and other repugnant or venomous animals, they burned them on the hearths of the temple; then they mixed the ashes with water, soot, tobacco, and living insects. Having presented this mixture to the gods, they smeared their bodies with it. Thus covered they faced all dangers, persuaded that they had become invulnerable, and that they could brave the teeth of wild beasts and the mouths of serpents. This mixture, which was called Teopatli ("divine medicine"), was regarded as a remedy for all diseases. The pupils of the seminaries were charged with collecting the animals required for the manufacture of this strange ointment, which is still in use among the Indians. The teopatli was also used in enchantments, and in the popular mind it has preserved its supernatural virtues up to the present time.

The Mexican priests led an austere life and fasted frequently. They rarely drank fermented liquors, and never became intoxicated. The three hundred and three ministers of Tezcatzoncatl, having ended the song by which they invoked him, placed three hundred and three reeds in the immense jar which was always kept full of agave wine by his devotees, set before the altar; one alone of these reeds was hollow. The priest to whom the hollow reed fell by lot had a right to drink the fermented liquor, since he alone could suck it up.

During the days when duty kept them in the temple, the priests avoided meeting all women except their own wives; if they chanced to encounter a strange woman, they passed her with eyes downcast in order not to see her. All incontinence on the part of the priests was severely punished. At Teotihuacan, the priest convicted of having violated the laws of chastity was delivered to the people, and beaten to death with sticks at night. At Ichcatlan, the high-priest was required to live in the temple, and abstain from all communication with women. If, unfortunately, he failed to observe this rule, he was killed, and his limbs presented to his successor, as a warning.

If a priest did not get up to assist at the night services, his ears and lips were pierced, or his head sprinkled with boiling water. On a second offence, he was expelled from the temple, and during the feast of the god of waters, was drowned

in a lake. Ordinarily the priests lived in a community, under the surveillance of a superior. The sacerdotal office among the Aztecs lasted only for a stated time, at the end of which the priests retired or returned again to civil life, to occupy important positions. However, some of them devoted themselves to the service of the gods for their entire lives. Women were admitted to the priesthood, but their offices were limited to incensing the idols, keeping up the sacred fire, sweeping the temple, preparing the provisions for offerings, and presenting them at the altar; they could neither sacrifice to the gods nor aspire to the higher dignities, no matter what their capacity.

Among these priestesses, some were consecrated to the religious life by their parents from their childhood, while others bound themselves voluntarily, by vows, for one or two years, either after a sickness, or to make a good marriage, or to interest the gods in the welfare of their families. The consecration of the first was practised as follows: At the birth of the child the parents offered it to the divinity whom they worshipped, and advised the priest of their district of this act, who communicated it to the Tepanteohuatzin, or superior-general of seminaries. Two months afterwards they took the child to the temple and placed a passion-flower, a small censer, and a little incense in her hand, as symbols of her future occupations. Every month this ceremony was repeated, and the barks of trees intended for the

sacred fire figured in it. At five years the little girl was sent to the Tepanteohuatzin, who placed her in a seminary. There she was instructed in the rules of religion, she was taught how to conduct herself, and to busy herself with work suited to her sex. In regard to the young girls who entered a seminary in consequence of a vow, they first were required to sacrifice their hair. They all lived greatly secluded, in quiet and meditation, under the surveillance of superiors. Some arose before midnight, others after, and still others before the break of day, to keep up the fire and incense the idols. Although priests assisted at the ceremony, they were not allowed to communicate with the priestesses.

Every morning these latter busied themselves in preparing the provisions for offerings, and in sweeping the aisles of the temple. When their regular duties were ended, they occupied themselves in spinning or weaving rich stuffs to clothe the idols and ornament the altars. The chastity of these vestals was the constant object of the surveillance of their superiors, and the least fault met with no pardon.

When the young girl, who had been consecrated to the worship of the gods since her childhood, reached her seventeenth year, her parents looked for a husband for her. When they had found one, they presented quails, incense, flowers and edibles on a handsome dish to the Tepanteohuatzin, thanking him for the care he had taken

in the education of their daughter, and asking permission to give her in marriage. The high dignitary generally granted the request, and exhorted his pupil to a complete observance of the new duties she was about to take upon herself.

Among the different Mexican religious orders, — there were some for women, and some for men, — those who had Quetzacoatl for a patron deserve special mention. They followed a most severe life; they plunged into the water at midnight and watched almost until daylight, singing hymns or performing acts of penitence. These priests and priestesses had a right to betake themselves at all times to the forests, and to bleed themselves, — a privilege which they enjoyed by reason of their great reputation for sanctity. The superiors of these convents bore the name of the god they served, and paid no visits except to the king.

The members of this order were consecrated to Quetzacoatl from their birth, and the father who intended his son for the worship of that god invited the superior of the convent to dinner. The latter sent one of the monks in his stead to the house, and the child was presented to him. The monk, taking the little creature in his arms, offered it to Quetzacoatl, pronouncing a prayer, and placing about its neck a collar called *yanueli*, which the child had to wear until its seventh year. At the end of its second year the child was conducted to the superior, who made an

incision in his breast, which, with the collar, was a sign of consecration. At the age of seven years he entered the seminary, after having first listened to a long moral discourse, in which he was reminded of the vow which had bound him to Quetzacoatl, and in which he was exhorted to conduct himself carefully, and to pray for his relatives and for the nation.

Another order, called Telpochtilztli (" reunion of children ") was consecrated to Tezcatlipoca. Children were bound to this supreme god by ceremonies similar to those just described, but they did not live in a community. In each quarter of the city, at sunset, they were called together by a superior to dance, and then to sing the praises of the gods.

Among the Totonacs was a brotherhood devoted to the worship of the goddess Centeotl, the members of which led a most austere life. Only men of sixty years of age, who were widowers and of good habits, could enter this order. Their number was limited; and not only the people, but the highest personages, the high-priest included, came to consult them. Seated on a bench, they listened to the questions addressed to them, with their eyes fixed on the ground, and their replies were received as oracles, even by the kings of Mexico. These monks employed their leisure in producing historical paintings, which they sent to the high-priest, that he might show them to the people.

The Aztec priests were generally of a literary character; and their austere life and their knowledge increased the influence which they owed to their sacred character. The Spanish missionaries, in spite of their prejudices, have always done justice to their morality and their chastity. They regarded them as men blinded by the devil, and not as impostors.

Although the external worship of the Aztecs was sanguinary, its similarities with many of the customs of the Catholic Church struck the Spaniards from the first. The cross of Tlaloc, the baptism of the new-born, the auricular confession, the vows of chastity, the monastic orders, etc., led the first missionaries to believe that the gospel had been preached in Anahuac at the time of the origin of Christianity; and in Quetzacoatl, who taught charity, gentleness, and peace, they thought they saw a disciple of Jesus Christ. Modern science has dispelled these illusions, as well as those that ascribe an Egyptian, a European, or a Hindoo origin to the people of Mexico. The Chichimecs, the Toltecs, and the Aztecs were at least American peoples, even if they were not autochthons. As to their civilizers, they cannot rationally be ranked among the disciples of Christ, but possibly they may have been sectaries of Buddha.

CHAPTER VIII.

HUMAN SACRIFICES. — OFFERINGS. — GLADIATORIAL COMBATS. — NUMBER OF VICTIMS SACRIFICED ANNUALLY. — FEAST OF FIRE. — FEASTS OF TEZCATLIPOCA AND OF HUITZILIPOCHTLI. — PENITENCES.

IT is not known what sort of sacrifices the Toltecs offered to their gods; as to the Chichimecs, they remained a long time without temples, and presented nothing to the objects they worshipped — the sun and the moon — but flowers, fruits, and incense. None of the peoples of Anahuac, moreover, had any idea of human sacrifices until the Aztecs furnished them with the deplorable example.

Among the latter the sacrifices varied, according to the god that was being honored, in the number of the victims as well as in the manner they were killed. In most cases the breast of the unhappy being doomed to die was opened; but others were burned, drowned, flayed, or condemned to die of hunger in the grottos where the dead were buried. Others, small in number, fell in the duels the Spaniards called gladiatorial combats. Generally, these atrocious acts were committed in temples, for they all had an altar set aside for these religious murders. That of

the temple of Mexico, called "techcatl," was a block of green jasper, its upper surface convex, three feet high and five feet long.

The ordinary ministers of sacrifice were six in number; they inherited their office. The chief among them was called Topiltzin; but at the moment he was performing his terrible functions he took the name of the god to whom he was sacrificing. He wore a red vestment, suggestive of the scapular, ornamented with cotton fringe. On his head he had a crown of green and yellow feathers; from his ears emeralds were suspended, and from his lower lip a feather or "tentetl," of a blue color. The others were clothed in white robes bordered with black. Their hair was dishevelled, and their foreheads were bound with ribbons ornamented with round bits of various colored papyrus. Their entire body was painted black, except around the mouth, which they daubed with white.

Once in possession of a victim, these executioners carried him naked to a grand altar (*techcatl*), on which they extended him, having first indicated to the assistants the idol to which they were about to offer the sacrifice, so that they might adore it. Four of the priests then held the unhappy being still by the legs and arms, while another kept him from moving his head, with the aid of an instrument of wood or stone, made in the form of a horse-shoe, and sometimes representing a curved serpent. The stone of the altar

being convex, the body was bent in an arch, with the breast and stomach prominent, and the victim could make no resistance. The Topiltzin then approached, and, with a knife of jasper or chalcedony, in accordance with the rite, opened the breast of the prisoner, tore out his heart, offered the palpitating trophy to the sun, and then threw it to the feet of the idol to burn it and to contemplate its ashes with veneration. If the idol was large and hollow, they placed the bleeding heart in its mouth with the aid of a golden spoon, and daubed its lips with the blood. When the victim was a prisoner-of-war, they cut off his head to preserve it for the Tzompatli, and the body was then thrown on the lower step of the temple. There, the officer or soldier who had captured him seized the prey, carried it away, had it cooked, and served it to his friends at a banquet. They ate only the thighs, the arms, and the breast. As to the trunk, it was reduced to ashes or given as food to the animals of the royal menagerie. The Otomites quartered the victim and sold the remains in the market. Among the Zapotecs men were sacrificed to the gods, women to the goddesses, and children to the inferior deities. Let us add, however, that although anthropophagi from religious sentiment, and not from taste, the Aztecs were never cannibals.

We have just described the ordinary manner of sacrifices, but sometimes they were marked by still more refined cruelty. For exampie, at the

feast of Teoteoinan, the woman who represented this goddess was beheaded while another woman carried her on her shoulders. During the feast spoken of as "the arrival of the gods," the victims were burned. At one of the feasts of Tlaloc two children of each sex were drowned; in another two children of six or seven years were bought, and then the two innocents were shut up in a cave, where they were suffered to die of fright or hunger.

The so-called sacrifice "of the gladiators" was very honorable, but only prisoners celebrated for their valor had a right to it. Near the temple of the large cities there was an open space, in the middle of which was a round platform, eight feet high, upon which was placed a block like a mill-stone. On this stone, called "temalacatl," which has been mentioned before, the prisoner was placed, armed with a shield and a short sword, and tied by one foot. An officer or a soldier, fully equipped, then mounted the stone to fight with the prisoner. It is easy to imagine the desperate efforts of the unhappy creature to escape death, and the exertions of his adversary to sustain his military reputation before his assembled countrymen. If the prisoner was overcome, a minister of sacrifice hastened, and, dead or alive, carried him to the sacrificial stone to open his breast and tear out his heart. The victor, applauded by the crowd, was rewarded with a military badge. If on the contrary the captive was

victorious, not alone over this antagonist but six others, his liberty was restored to him, his arms were given back, and he returned to his country in triumph. The anonymous Conqueror, who furnishes these details, relates that in a battle between the Cholulans and their neighbors, the Huexotzincos, the principal lord of Cholula rushed so far forward in the fight that, separated from his companions, he was made a prisoner. Placed upon the temalacatl, he vanquished the seven combatants opposed to him. The Huexotzincos, fearing the punishment which such a valiant enemy could inflict upon them if they let him free, killed him, — an action which covered them with infamy in the eyes of the neighboring peoples.

In these combats, it must be said, the prisoner rarely escaped death ; for when he fought with too great courage, a soldier accustomed to use his weapons with his left hand was set against him, and he soon confused and overcame the prisoner. Thus, to escape the torture of a struggle which they knew in advance to be useless, many of the prisoners refused to defend themselves, and offered their breast to the sacrificers. These gladiatorial combats always drew a crowd, and excited it. These sanguinary days generally ended with feasts and dances.

In regard to the number of victims annually sacrificed in Anahuac, historians differ widely. Nevertheless, without departing very far from the

truth, the number can be placed at twenty thousand. The number of sacrifices depended upon the number of prisoners taken in battle; in war the Mexican soldiers were more anxious to secure their enemies alive than to kill them.

Generally, the victims were muffled in the clothing and insignia of the idol to which they were to be offered. An escort of soldiers led them thus dressed about the city, and collected alms for the temple. If the prisoner escaped, the chief of the escort was sacrificed in his stead.

Besides men, the Mexicans also sacrificed animals. They offered partridges and falcons to Huitzilipochtli; hares, rabbits, and foxes to Mixcoatl. Each morning a certain number of priests, holding a partridge in the hand watched the sun rise. When scarcely above the horizon it was saluted with the sound of noisy musical instruments, and the birds, immediately decapitated, were offered to it.

Plants, fine stones, and incense also served as offerings. The first flowers were presented to Tlaloc and to Coatlicue, and the first ears of corn to Centeotl. The offerings of food, as we have seen, were sufficient for the nourishment of the priests; for every morning the altars were laden by the faithful with steaming meats, so that the vapor, mounting to the nostrils of the idols, might nourish the gods they represented.

However, the most frequent offering was incense, and every house possessed a censer. The

Aztecs incensed their idols, the priests, the four cardinal points, the fathers of family, and the judges in the courts, especially when they were about to pronounce sentence. Thus this was an act of homage paid to the powerful, rather than an act of religion.

The cruelties and superstitions of the Mexicans were imitated, not only by all the nations they subjugated, but also by their neighbors, who, however, practised them less frequently. The Tlaxcaltecs, at one of their feasts, attached a prisoner to a high cross and killed him with arrows; at other times the cross was low, and the victim was beaten to death with sticks.

The great feast of the "renewal of the fire" began the last day of the cycle, which, as we have seen, was composed of fifty-two years. In the evening the fire was extinguished in the temples and in the houses; then all the earthen utensils were broken, as a preparation for the end of the world. At this time every one was in a terrible state of suspense, fearing he had seen the light of day for the last time, doubting whether the sun would rise the next day, or whether it would not leave the heavens lost in darkness. The whole empire was a prey to this anxiety, and the people stood on the towers of the temples, and on the roofs of their houses, in silence, watching the tops of the mountains where immense bonfires would be lighted if the gods showed themselves merciful.

At an appointed hour the priests, wearing the ornaments of the god they served, and carrying besides one of his images, directed themselves, followed by an excited and terrified multitude, towards Mount Huitzachtla, which is about two and a half miles from Mexico. They advanced, measuring their progress by the march of the stars, so that they might arrive at the mountain a little before midnight. One of them, belonging to the suburb of Capulco, had the privilege of producing a new fire; hence he marched, provided with an instrument made of two pieces of dry wood fitted together, called "tletaxoni." The solemn hour having arrived, this priest approached a victim of noble origin, whose heart had just been torn out, placed on the wound his instrument for striking fire, and imparted a rapidly rotating movement to one of its branches. Soon sparks leaped forth, and a loud cry of joy escaped from every one; for the sight of these sparks announced that day would again appear, that the sun would again brighten the earth for a period of fifty-two years.

As soon as fire was produced, an immense funeral pile was ignited, on which the sacrificed victim was thrown. An extraordinary activity succeeded the despondency of the last hours. Every one hastened to light the torch with which he had provided himself, and then to regain his dwelling. Couriers bearing the sacred fire spread in all directions, lighting the torches of all

those who waited for them on the roads; the latter in turn performed the same service for those whom they met. The fire was carried in all directions, and torches and bonfires were lighted everywhere. This new fire, transmitted from place to place, served to relight the hearths, to the very confines of the empire.

During this time, the priests having returned to the great temple, placed a brazier before the altar of Huitzilipochtli, — a brazier to which all the inhabitants of the city came to light pine branches. They laughed, sang, and congratulated each other, for they had still fifty-two years more to live! Hence the thirteen days complementary to the cycle — intended to make the solar and civil years agree — were employed in repairing the buildings, whitewashing the houses, and mending the furniture and clothing, so that everything might be new, or at least so in appearance, on the day when the new cycle began. On that day, illuminations, dances, and banquets consoled the people for the bitter hours they had passed, and numerous victims covered the steps of the temples with their blood.

Let us note, as a singular superstition, that on the last night of the cycle, pregnant women were shut up in the granaries by their husbands, and their faces were covered with leaves of the agave. By this means it was thought they would escape being transformed into deer. The children's faces were covered with masks, and they were

prevented from going to sleep, in the fear that they would be metamorphosed into mice.

The sacrifices which the inhabitants of Cuauhtitlan offered every four years to the god of fire were thus celebrated: The terrible day having arrived, they planted six large trees at the foot of the altar, killed two women, tore off their skins, and removed their thigh-bones. The following day two priests took possession of these trophies. Carrying the bones in their hands, they slowly descended the steps of the temple, uttering sharp cries; to which the people replied, "See, our gods are approaching." Having reached the last step, the priests, while drums were beating, were decked with paper wings, and then headless partridges were placed in their mouths. Thereupon they began a dance, which did not end until nightfall, during which the people sometimes killed as many as eight thousand partridges. These ceremonies over, the priests suspended six prisoners to the tops of the trees, and these unhappy beings became targets for thousands of arrows. When they were dead the priests let the bodies drop, and removed their hearts. The remains of these victims, as well as the bodies of the partridges, were divided among the priests and nobles, and they constituted one of the dishes of the banquet which ended the feast.

The peoples of Anahuac treated themselves also with the greatest cruelty; accustomed from

their childhood to see blood spilled, they shed their own in profusion. The penances they imposed on themselves, either in expiation of a sin, or to prepare themselves to celebrate the feasts of their gods, cause a shudder. They martyred their bodies as if they had no feeling, and shed their blood as if it were a superfluous liquid, says Clavigero.

Some priests bled themselves daily. With the aid of thorns from the agave, they pierced their lips, their tongues, their arms, and the calves of their legs. In the wounds produced by these punctures they introduced bamboo twigs, the size of which they gradually increased. The blood was collected on leaves of a species of palm, and the thorns were planted in balls of hay that were exposed in the temple. Those who suffered these mutilations bathed themselves in a pool which was called "Ezapan," because its waters were always dyed with blood.

Fasts were frequent among the Mexicans; on these occasions they abstained from fermented drinks and meat, and ate but once in twenty-four hours. Some of these fasts were obligatory for the people, — such, for example, as the five days' fast that preceded the feast of Tezcatlipoca, and the feast of the sun. During these days the king retired to a temple to bleed himself, in accordance with the national custom.

There were other special fasts, such as the fast of the owners of the victims, which took place

on the eve of the day they were to be sacrificed. The masters of prisoners-of-war that were to be sacrificed to Xipe fasted for forty days. The nobles, as well as the king, had special apartments in the temple, where they did penance; and on certain occasions all the public employees, after their work, had to pass the night in one of these retreats.

In the principal temple of Teotihuacan, lived four priests celebrated for the austerity of their life. Clothed like poor people, they ate nothing but a two-ounce loaf of Indian corn-bread each day, and drank a single cup of *atolli*, — a sort of soup made from corn, which the Indians still make. Every night two of them watched, singing hymns, incensing the idols, and sprinkling a little of their blood on the altars. They led this life of fasting for four years, with no other respite than a certain feast-day each month, on which they might eat whatever they liked. On the eve of a religious ceremony these fanatics perforated their ears with agave-thorns, and inserted pieces of bamboo in the wounds. If one of them died a candidate took his place. Finally, the time of penitence having passed, four new priests immediately began the same life. The renown of these ascetics was so great that even the kings showed them respect. But woe to one of them who failed in his duties! He was beaten to death; his body was burned, and his ashes thrown to the winds.

In public calamities, the high-priest of Mexico condemned himself to an extraordinary fast. He retired to the heart of a forest, and lived in a cabin of boughs that were renewed as they withered. Deprived of all communication with his kind, with no other food than raw maize and water, he passed a year there, at intervals shedding his blood.

One of the four great Aztec feasts was that of Tezcatlipoca. Ten days before its date, a priest, decked in the vestments of the idol, came out of the temple, carrying a bouquet in his hand, and blowing a flageolet made of terra cotta, which gave forth shrill sounds. Having saluted the four cardinal points, commencing with the east, the priest blew his instrument louder, then he picked up a little earth which he placed in his mouth and swallowed. All knelt when they heard the sounds of the flute, and, full of terror, those who had committed a crime prayed the god to pardon their sin, and not to allow it to be discovered; thus their zeal and fear betrayed them. At the same time the soldiers asked for strength and valor to overcome the enemy, and to take many prisoners. At a stated time all the people repeated the act of swallowing earth, and implored the protection of the gods.

The sound of the flageolet was heard every day until the hour at which the feast began. On the evening before, the nobles brought a new dress to the idol, which the priest immediately put on it;

the old one was placed in a chest and preserved as a relic. Besides this new dress, they decked the god with badges of gold, silver, and feathers; the curtain that generally hung before the entrance to the temple was raised, so that all the faithful could see and worship the god.

On the day of the feast, not only did the slaves temporarily recover their liberty; but for fear of displeasing the god, their masters abstained from abusing them, even by word. The sun having risen, the people assembled on the lower step of the temple. A number of priests, painted black, clothed in the same manner as the idol, carried it on a litter. Young people of both sexes surrounded his neck with a long cord ornamented with grains of parched corn strung on threads and forming a wreath. This garland, a symbol of the dryness so feared by the Mexicans, was called "Toxcatl," — a name which became that of the month during which the feast was celebrated.

Bearing these wreaths in the hand and about the neck, the young people and the nobles marched in procession around the temple, the pavement of which was strewn with flowers and odoriferous herbs. The statue was then replaced on the altar, and was offered gold, jewels, flowers, feathers, animals, and eatables, prepared by the women or young girls, who, on that day, in consequence of a vow, filled the office of servants of the god. The young girls, led by a priest clothed in a strange fashion, brought food which

the young men distributed. Finally, they proceeded to the sacrifice of the victim who represented the god Tezcatlipoca, a victim chosen from among the young prisoners who were most remarkable for their physical qualities. Destined, a year in advance, to die, this young man from that day wore the same vestments as the idol. He went about the city at his pleasure, but always escorted by guards; and he was adored as the image of the supreme divinity. Twenty days before the feast, the unhappy being was married to four young girls, and during the last five days he was procured all the pleasures possible.

On the morning of the feast he was conducted to the temple in great pomp, and a few minutes before arriving there he took leave of his wives. He accompanied the idol in the procession just described; then the hour of sacrifice having come, he was extended before the altar, where the high-priest, with a show of respect, opened his breast and took out his heart. His body was not thrown from the top of the steps, like that of other victims, but was carried to the temple and decapitated. The skull was placed in the Tzompatli, with those of the unfortunate beings who had preceded him. His arms and thighs, cooked and seasoned, were placed on the table of the nobles.

After the sacrifice, the members of the seminaries and the priests engaged in a dance, which lasted until sunset; while the young girls carried

the idol fruits ornamented with skulls, and corn-bread kneaded with honey. The bread and fruits placed before the altar served as prizes for the young men who were victorious in a race which took place on the stairways of the temple. This, however, was not their only reward; they were dressed in rich garments, and were cheered by the priests and the people. The feast was ended by restoring to liberty the members of the seminaries, of both sexes, who had reached a marriageable age. Those who remained in the seminary heaped outrageous ridicule on their old companions, showered them with arrows made of reeds, and reproached them for giving up the service of the gods for the pleasures of matrimony. The priests permitted these excesses as an outlet for the natural effervescence of youth.

During the same month the first feast of Huitzilipochtli was celebrated. His priests first made a statue of the god as large as a man. They represented the bones by acacia wood, and the flesh by means of a paste composed of seeds and blood mixed together. As soon as the figure was finished, it was dressed in clothes made of cotton or agave-fibre, and covered with a cloak made of feathers. They placed a paper parasol, ornamented with feathers and surmounted with a bloody knife of flint, over his head, and on his breast a plate of gold. All the vestments of the image were covered with designs representing bones and various parts of the human body,

either to pay homage to the power of the god in battle, or to recall the terrible vengeance inflicted by him on those who had conspired against the honor and life of his mother.

The statue, afterwards placed on a litter supported by four wooden serpents, was carried from the place where it had been made, to the altar, by the four most renowned officers of the army. A number of young people, forming a circle with the aid of arrows which some held by the points and others by the shafts, preceded the litter, bearing a sort of placard on which were represented the glorious actions of the god, — actions which were celebrated at the same time with hymns.

The day of the feast having arrived, in the morning a number of partridges were beheaded and their bodies thrown to the foot of the altar. The king was the first to sacrifice a bird; he was immediately imitated by the priests and the people. All this game was afterwards placed on the table of the king and of the priests. The faithful, armed with earthen censers, burned perfumes in honor of the gods and collected the ashes in a grate called "Tlexictli."

After this ceremony, which caused the name of "incensing of Huitzilipochtli" to be given to the feast, the young girls and the priests danced. The former painted their faces, ornamented their arms with feathers, crowned themselves with chaplets of maize, and carried in their hands

pieces of bamboo, surmounted with streamers of cotton or paper. The priests — their faces blackened, their foreheads covered with round pieces of papyrus, their lips smeared with honey — were armed with a sceptre terminating in a ball of feathers surmounted by a flower. Around the hearth where the sacred fire was burning, two men, bearing a cage made of pine, danced while the priests supported themselves on their sceptres; all these ceremonies had a meaning. In another place, the courtiers and the officers also engaged in a dance. The musicians, instead of occupying the centre of the hall, placed themselves in such a way that the sound of the instruments could be heard, without those who played them being seen.

A year before the feast, at the same time that the victim intended for Tezcatlipoca was chosen, the one who was to be offered to Huitzilipochtli was also selected. This new victim was designated by the name of Ixteocale ("wise lord of heaven"). The two captives walked about together; still, however, the representative of Huitzilipochtli was not worshipped by the people. On the day of sacrifice the victim was clothed in a dress of paper, and crowned with a sort of mitre made of eagle's feathers. On his shoulders was placed a net and a bag; thus arrayed he took part in the dances. Custom allowed the unhappy being himself to fix the hour of his sacrifice. Thus, when resolved to die, he presented himself to the

sacrificers, who, instead of laying him on the altar, held him on their arms while cutting out his heart. This task accomplished, they resumed their dances, and did not cease until night, interrupting them at times to incense the idol. It was during this feast that the priests made an incision in the stomach, the breast, and the wrists of children born a year before. This operation consecrated them to the protecting god of the nation; and it was this custom that led to the belief that circumcision was practised among the Aztecs. However that may be, Torquemada affirms that it was one of the customs of the Totonacs.

Each god, therefore, had his feasts, which always terminated with human sacrifices. The Aztecs had scarcely time enough to fulfil all the duties of their religion. In all probability, the individual Aztec observed no feasts besides those of Tlaloc, Quetzacoatl, Tezcatlipoca, and Huitzilipochtli, except the feasts of the protecting god of his caste or of his trade. In the birth, marriage, and burial ceremonies, we shall return to the study of the superstitions of this strange people.

CHAPTER IX.

ELECTION OF KINGS. — THEIR CORONATION. — THE ROYAL COUNSELLORS. — AMBASSADORS. — COURIERS. — THE NOBILITY. — THE PEOPLE. — TAXES AND TRIBUTES.

WHEN the Aztecs placed Acamapictli at their head, conferring the power, the honors, and the rights of royalty on him, they seem to have decided that from that time forth the kings should always be elected. Hence, shortly afterwards, four electors were appointed, whose duty it was to represent in their person the votes of the whole nation. These electors, chosen from among the principal nobles, and even belonging to the royal family, were also celebrated for their wisdom. Their authority ceased after the election, and they could be re-elected only with the general assent of the nobility. If one of the electors died before the king, he was immediately replaced. Beginning with the reign of Itzacoatl, the kings of Alcolhuacan and of Tacuba were numbered among the electors; but their title seems to have been purely honorary, for there is no evidence that they ever took an active part in the election.

In order that the power of the electors might not be too great, and to escape party conflicts

as much as possible, the crown was made hereditary in the family of Acamapictli. Afterwards it was decided that one of the brothers, and not one of the sons, of the dead king, should succeed him. If he had no brother, a nephew or cousin of the deceased was chosen, the electors selecting the most worthy of the number. It must be noticed in this connection that in Mexico primogeniture conferred no privileges. Thus, after the death of Moteuczoma I., his cousin Axayacatl, whom he had himself recommended, was elected in preference to his older brothers Tizoc and Ahuitzotl.

The election of a new king did not take place until the funeral ceremonies of his predecessor had been celebrated. The election over, the result was communicated to the feudatories, and to the kings of Alcolhuacan and of Tacuba, who were charged with its ratification. The two kings, accompanied by all the nobility, having chosen a propitious day, conducted the new sovereign to the temple. The feudatories led the way, clothed with the insignia of their position, followed by the nobles of the court, decorated with the distinctive marks of the offices they filled. Then came the two allied kings, and after them the newly elected, with no garment but the girdle demanded by decency. He went up to the temple, leaning on the shoulders of the two most important lords of the court; one of the high-priests, escorted by all the religious dignitaries, came to

meet him. The new king began by adoring Huitzilipochtli, touching the soil with his hand, and afterwards carrying a little of it to his lips. The high-priest then covered him with a sort of black paint, and sprinkled him four times with holy water, by means of branches of cedar and of willow, and stalks of corn. He was then covered with a cloak on which skulls and human bones were painted; on his head were placed two veils, a black one and a green one, ornamented with the same funereal emblems. Finally, they placed rich sandals on his feet; and from his neck suspended a small gourd full of seeds, intended to protect him against certain diseases, against witchcraft and deception; they then placed in his hands a censer and a bag of copal resin, that he might incense the gods.

During all these ceremonies the king remained in a crouching position. The high-priest, taking his place on a seat, pronounced a speech in which, after having congratulated the new-elect, he enumerated the duties he would have to fulfil in regard to the people who had conferred the power on him. He exhorted the king to be zealous in the cause of religion, to be just, to assist the poor, and to defend the country. Next came the harangues of the allied kings, and those of the nobles, to which the king replied with words of gratitude, and with the promise to devote himself to the welfare of the state.

After these official discourses, the king, accompanied by his cortège, descended to the lowest steps of the temple, where the rest of the nobility awaited him; these, having sworn allegiance to the new king, offered him costly apparel and jewels. He afterwards entered a special hall. There he was obliged to remain alone for four days, to content himself with only one meal in every twenty-four hours, to bathe himself daily, and to puncture his ears, so that he might be able to present drops of blood to Huitzilipochtli with the perfumes he gave him. Finally, he asked the gods to give him the enlightenment he needed to govern his kingdom wisely. On the fifth day the nobles came to lead him to his palace. There he confirmed his feudatories in their charges, and the public amusements, balls, banquets, and illuminations began.

In consequence of a custom which Moteuczoma made a law, the new king, before his coronation was obliged to undertake a war, to secure the victims intended for the gods in that important ceremony. The Aztecs therefore were never at a loss for reasons to go to war; they had no difficulty in finding rebels to be punished, or in picking a quarrel with some of their neighbors. Historians are silent in regard to the coronation ceremonies; all we know is that it was the privilege of the king of the Alcolhuas to place the crown on the head of the new king. This crown, called "copilli," resembled a mitre,

the front part of which turned back and ended in a point, and the lower part of which fell down over the neck. It was made of gold, or sometimes of feathers chosen to suit the taste of the one who was to wear it (fig. 14).

FIG. 14. — AHUITZOTL AND HUITZILIHUITL, CROWNED WITH THE COPILLI; ALSO THE HIEROGLYPHICS OF THEIR NAMES.

In the interior of the palace the king was vested in a blue-and-white mantle; blue and white were the royal colors, and could be worn only by the king. When he went to the temple he always wore white clothes. On other occasions, according as he dispensed justice, presided over his council, or attended a public feast, he wore different costumes. Whenever he went out he was surrounded by courtiers, was crowned with the copilli, and was preceded by a noble armed with a wand of aromatic wood, or one made of gold and silver, — a sign that announced to the people the approach of their sovereign.

The authority of the Aztec kings, like all royal authority, varied with the character of the person elected, and the circumstances in which he was placed. At the beginning of the monarchy, their power was very limited, almost paternal. Their

conduct was full of humanity, and the dues and services exacted from their subjects were very moderate. Gradually, pride on the one hand and servility on the other led them to transgress the limits of the authority which the nation had granted them, and they usurped absolute power, and even despotism. In spite of these usurpations, the Mexicans always respected their kings; they never revolted except in the time of the weakness of Moteuczoma Xocoyotzin, when they saw him accept the yoke of the Spaniards.

The Aztec kings had three superior councils, composed of men of the highest nobility. All affairs relative to the government of the provinces, to taxes, and to wars to be undertaken, were discussed in these assemblies. Generally, the king took no important step without the consent of these counsellors, who by degrees became simple courtiers.

Among the numerous officers of the court, there was a treasurer-general, or grand major-domo, charged with receiving the tribute levied on the provinces. The accounts, according to Bernal Diaz del Castillo, were kept by means of paintings. Another treasurer took care of the jewels, and at the same time directed the workmen who manufactured them. A third superintended the artists in feather-work, and a grand-huntsman supplied the woods with game.

The Aztec kings were represented by ambassadors, and although the ceremonial provided

speeches the forms of which varied but little, men of high birth and of acknowledged eloquence were always chosen for delicate missions. An embassy was composed of several persons, bearing sacred insignia. Generally, the plenipotentiaries were dressed in green garments ornamented with fringe, and their head-dress was embellished with magnificent feathers. They held in the right hand an arrow with the point towards the earth. On their left arm they hung a shield, and a net filled with provisions. They were treated with respect wherever they went, and, when in the enemy's country, as long as they did not leave the highway that led to the place to which they were journeying, their persons were inviolable.

Having arrived in the neighborhood of the city in which they were to exercise the powers conferred upon them, before entering the town they waited for the nobles of the place to come to meet them, for the purpose of conducting them to the "public house," where they were lodged, fed, and cared for. Perfumes were burned before them, bouquets offered them, and as soon as they had rested they were conducted to the palace of the governor or king. Finally, they were taken to the audience-hall, in which the person to whom they had been sent awaited them, surrounded by his counsellors.

After a profound bow, the ambassadors seated themselves on the floor in the middle of the room, and without raising their eyes, without opening

their lips, waited until they were invited to speak. This invitation given, the principal among them, after a greeting, explained in a low voice the object of their mission. The king and his counsellors listened attentively without interrupting him. This harangue over, the ambassadors returned to their lodgings. In the meantime the king discussed the subject with his advisers, and one of his ministers carried his answer to the ambassadors. They were then supplied with provisions for their journey, and those who had gone to receive them reconducted them as far as the city gates.

The Aztec kings had couriers; these men, whenever there was occasion for it, revealed to the people by their dress, actions, or manner of proceeding, the news they were carrying to the king. If a battle had been lost they hurried along with their hair dishevelled. On arriving at Mexico they went straight to the palace, knelt down before the king, and told him of the defeat. If, on the contrary, they came to announce a victory, their hair was tied up with a colored cord, and they wore white clothes. Holding a shield in the left hand and a sword in the right, they proceeded making a show of fighting, and singing hymns that recalled past victories. The people, excited by the news they carried, accompanied them, uttering cries of joy.

In order that messages might arrive promptly at the capital from all parts of the empire, small

towers were constructed on the principal roads every four miles, in which couriers kept themselves always in readiness to act as relays. The first who set out went as far as the nearest post, communicated the news which he bore, verbally to one of his colleagues, or gave him the hieroglyphic pictures which were used in place of writing. Carried from post to post the news soon reached its destination; for it is said that these couriers travelled as much as two hundred and fifty miles a day. By means of this system fresh fish from the Gulf of Mexico, about two hundred miles distant could be placed daily on the table of Moteuczoma.

From their youth the couriers were exercised in running, and the priests charged with educating them for this employment stimulated their zeal by rewarding them with prizes. Even in the present time the distances traversed by Indian couriers, who trot rather than walk, are constant surprises to Europeans.

The nobles of the Aztec empire were divided into a multitude of classes which the Spaniards confounded under the general name of Caziques. This word, which signifies "prince" or "lord," belongs to the Hataian language, and its Mexican equivalent is Tlaotani. When the Spaniards arrived there were thirty of these feudatories possessing a hundred thousand vassals, and three thousand who owned a village or large town.

The nobles of each class enjoyed distinct privileges; they wore a costume which enabled one to

recognize their rank. Only the nobles had a right to ornament their clothes with golden jewels, silver, and precious stones. Up to the reign of Moteuczoma II., all important positions in the palace, the magistracy, and the army were the exclusive appanage of the nobles.

In general, titles of nobility were hereditary among the Aztecs, and many of the great families, descendants of the founders of Mexico, preserved their influence up to the hour of the conquest. Even to-day some branches of these formerly powerful families exist, but they are degraded by extreme poverty and confounded with the lower classes.

The land in Mexico was divided among the crown, the nobles, the priests and the plebeians, and the major-domo of the palace possessed very accurate plans of the entire territory. In these maps the royal lands were indicated by purple, those of the nobles by cochineal red, those of the people by yellow. The limits and extent of each estate could be seen at a glance, and for a long time the Spaniards used them to settle the differences that arose among the Indians. Many villages preserve some of these documents. I may cite among the number that of the village of Tilapa, in the valley of Orizava, which I endeavored in vain to acquire. In these documents not only are the estates represented, but also the crops harvested, and the animals found on them.

Among the inalienable properties of the crown there was one of which certain court dignitaries were the usufructuaries. These lords paid no tribute; but on each of their visits to the sovereign they presented him with flowers and birds as a sign of vassalage. Besides, they were charged with the care of the royal palaces and gardens. These usufructuaries accompanied the king whenever he appeared in public, and on this account they were always treated with honor and respect. When one of them died his eldest son succeeded him; but if he changed his place of residence he lost his rights, and a new titulary named by the king, or elected by the inhabitants of the district, took his place.

The possessions of the nobles originated in royal gifts granted as a reward for service rendered the state; and they were transmitted from father to son. These lands were not inalienable, but it was prohibited to give or sell them to plebeians.

In the matter of inheritance, the Mexicans respected the right of primogeniture. Nevertheless, if the first-born son was incapable of taking care of his property, the father could choose another one of his children, on condition that the latter would promise to supply the wants of the eldest. Girls, at least in Tlascala, never inherited any property; by this arrangement the estate of a family was prevented from falling into the hands of strangers. Hereditary titles accom-

panied by landed estates first originated in Anahuac, in the twelfth century, when Xolotl, king of the Chichimecs, divided the lands between the nobles of his own country and those of Alcolhuacan. These gifts were made on the express condition that those thus favored would always remain faithful to the king, and would recognize his power, and that in case of need they would aid the crown with their goods, their person, and the arms of their vassals.

The lands that belonged to cities and villages were divided into as many parts as there were districts; under no pretext could they be alienated, and certain portions were set aside to supply the army with food. Later, the kings of Spain assigned lands to the Indians, and granted them the right of perpetual possession. This was of no avail, for owing to the influence of certain individuals and the injustice of certain judges the Indians were frequently deprived of their lands. At the present time there are few villages, especially in the neighborhood of cities, that are not engaged in litigation with the municipalities of their powerful neighbors, to defend what remains to them of the lands granted them by the kings of Spain, — lands without which they would cease to exist.

All the provinces conquered by the Aztecs were generally divided among their favorites, who paid a tribute consisting of a quantity of fruits, animals, and minerals, determined by a tariff, to

the crown. Besides this, as a tax, the merchants had to give a portion of their merchandise, and the laborers a part of their work. In the capital of each province was a storehouse for the reception of grain, provisions, clothing, all the objects collected by the tax-gatherers of the district. These tax-gatherers, who as a badge of office carried a rod in one hand and a fan in the other, were detested by the people, who are always and everywhere enemies of the public treasury, the utility of which they are apt to overlook.

The plebeians were required by law to give a certain amount of their labor towards embellishing the capital; this obligation, however, always ended upon their marriage. At that time they offered a banquet to the officers in charge of public works, introduced their wife to them, and received a copper hatchet as a sign of liberation.

The treasurers of the crown used for registers, as we have said, paintings on which were represented not only the tributary peoples, but the nature, the quantity and the quality of the products these people were required to deliver. According to these statistics, of which there are many in the Mendoza collection, Xocomocho, Huehuetla, and Mazatlan, together with some other cities on the Pacific coast, were annually required to contribute to the royal treasury cotton cloths, four thousand bundles of various colored feathers, two hundred sacks of cacao, forty tiger skins, and a hundred and sixty birds

of stated species. Huaxyacac, Coyalpan, and Atlacuechahuaxan, cities of the Zapotecs, were taxed forty ingots of gold and twenty sacks of cochineal. Tlachquiauhco, Axotlan and Teotzapotlan furnished twenty vases of a specified dimension filled with gold dust. Tochtepec, Otatitlan, Cozamaloapam, with some other cities on the Atlantic coast, besides cotton cloths, cacao, and gold, paid a tribute of twenty thousand bundles of feathers, six collars made of emeralds, forty pieces of amber and rock crystal mounted in gold, to be used as ear-rings, besides one hundred bottles of a resinous substance called liquid-amber, and sixteen thousand balls of Indian rubber.

Tepeyacac, Quecholac, Tecamalchalco, Acatzinco, etc., furnished four thousand sacks of lime, four thousand loads of large pieces of bamboos for the construction of buildings, and the same number of small pieces for the manufacture of arrows; also a certain quantity of aromatic substances. Molinaltepec and its neighbors in the Warm Lands sent six hundred measures of honey, forty vases full of yellow ochre, a hundred and sixty copper hatchets, and forty turquoises set in gold. The cities of the country of the Tlahuicas contributed sixteen thousand large papyrus-leaves and four thousand gourds of various shapes. Mats to the number of eight thousand were furnished by Tehuiloxacan. Finally, other provinces sent lime, posts, birds,

and quadrupeds. Xilotepec, a city of the Otomites, paid a tribute of forty live eagles. And on the same authority, the pictures of the Mendoza collection, we know that the Matlatzincos, conquered by king Axayacatl, were required, besides paying the ordinary tributes, to cultivate a large territory, the products of which belonged to the army.

These enormous contributions, augmented by the spoils of war, and presents from governors of provinces and from the feudatories, rendered the sovereigns so opulent that their luxury astonished the conquering Spaniards. On the other hand these burdens crushed the people, who saw them continually increasing. It is certain that a large part of this wealth went to pay the employees, the ministers, and the magistrates, to reward services rendered the state, and also to help widows, orphans, invalids, and old men, — classes of people for whom the Aztecs always felt great compassion. It is also known that in time of famine the royal storehouses were opened to the people; but how many of the unfortunates who could scarcely pay the tribute ever again saw any part of what they had contributed? To the overwhelming weight of these exactions must be added the severity with which they were collected; for the person who was unable to meet them was sold as a slave, and his liberty cancelled the debt his labor had been unable to discharge.

Behind the unheard-of luxury of the court was concealed the misery that naturally accompanies all despotic governments. The king, the nobles, the priests, the officers, and the privileged classes, lived in abundance; the people, bound to the soil, oppressed, badly fed, with no hope of seeing their condition improve, toiled to supply, not their own needs, but those of the great. Between the king and his vassals there was an impassable chasm; and the latter, the soldiers especially, considered death as a blessing, for it opened to them the gates of a world where their sufferings would cease forever. Oppressor and oppressed: do not these two words, unfortunately, sum up the history of man in all ages and in all countries?

CHAPTER X.

BIRTH. — BAPTISM. — MARRIAGES. — WEDDING CEREMONIES. — POLYGAMY. — BURIAL. — CREMATION.

WHEN a Mexican woman found herself to be *enceinte*, she communicated the news to her nearer relatives. Whereupon the family gathered to congratulate the future mother, and to choose a midwife whose duty it would be to help her. The "mortal hour" having come, if the patient died she was dressed in her richest garments; then, after the sun set, her husband, accompanied by a number of matrons armed with swords and shields, carried her on his shoulders. It might be necessary to defend the body of the deceased against the attacks of new soldiers, who, owing to a strange superstition, believed that a finger of a woman who died in childbirth was a talisman that would render them invincible. Having saved the body from mutilation, it was placed on the steps of the temple of the goddesses Cihuapilli ("celestial women"). The husband, assisted by his friends, had still to keep watch for four days over the remains, for during that time it might be in danger of sorcery.

Usually, the midwife washed the new-born, and said to him: "Receive this water, for thy mother

is the goddess Chalchiutlicue. This bath wipes out the stains that come from thy fathers, cleanses thy heart, and gives thee a new life." Then, addressing herself to the goddess, she asked her to grant her prayer. Next, taking water in her right hand, and breathing on it, she moistened the mouth, the head, and the breast of the child with it, and bathed him, saying: "May the invisible God descend upon this water, may he wipe out all thy sins, may he guard thee against evil fortune! Gracious creature, the gods Ometeuctli and Omecihuatl have created thee in the highest heaven, to send thee to this earth; but know thou that life is sad, painful, and full of misery and evil, and that thou canst eat only by working. May God help thee in the many troubles that await thee!" After this discourse she congratulated the father, the mother, and the relatives.

The bath over, they consulted the soothsayers in regard to the good or bad fortune in store for the child. The sign that marked the day of his birth was noted, and also the one that ruled during the period of the last thirteen years. If the child was born at midnight, they compared the preceding day and the day following. These observations completed, the soothsayers foretold the future lot of the new-born. If the day was considered ill-omened, the second bath of the child was postponed for five days.

The second bath was more important than the first; the relatives, the friends, and a number of

children were invited to be present. If the father was rich he gave a banquet and presented a garment to each guest. If he was a soldier, he made a little dress, a miniature bow, and four little arrows, for the new-born; if a laborer or artisan, some little tools like those used in his own trade. The same was done in the case of girls, for whom little spindles were made. A number of lights were ignited, and the midwife carried the child about the court of the dwelling, placed it on a heap of leaves, near a basin, and repeated the words already quoted. Rubbing all his limbs, she added: "Where art thou, evil fortune? Leave the body of this child." She then raised him above her head, offered him to the gods, and prayed them to grant him all the virtues. She then invoked the goddess of the waters, next the sun and the earth. "Thou, O Sun, father of all the living," she said, "and thou, O Earth, our mother, accept this child, protect it as if it were thine own son! If he must be a soldier, may he die in battle, defending the honor of the gods, so that he may be able to enjoy in heaven the pleasures reserved for the brave who sacrifice their lives in such a good cause."

After this, the miniature imitations of the arms he would have to carry or the utensils he would have to use were placed in the little hands of the child, and the protecting god of the profession for which he was intended was invoked. The arms were then buried in a field where it was supposed

the infant might fight in the future. If the child was a daughter, the little spindle was buried in the dwelling itself under the "metatl," or stone for pounding maize. According to Boturini, the neophyte was passed four times over a flame.

Before placing the tools in the hands of the new-born, the midwife enjoined the children who had been brought there for the ceremony to give their little comrade a name, and they pronounced the name that the father had previously indicated to them. They then dressed the babe, and placed him on a bed, praying Xoalticitl, goddess of the cradles, to warm him on her bosom, and Xoalteuctli, god of night, to lull him to sleep.

The name given to the child was sometimes borrowed from the astronomical signs of the day of his birth, a custom that was almost general among the Miztecs. Thus, he was named Macuilcoatl, that is, "fifth serpent," or Omecalli ("second house"). At times the name was suggested by some remarkable circumstance attending his entrance into the world; for example, one of the four chiefs who governed the republic of Tlascala when the Spaniards landed was called Citlapoca ("smoking star"), because he was born at the time of the appearance of a comet.

A boy who was born on the day of the renewal of fire took the name of Molpilli, and a girl that of Xiuhnenetl, — names which recalled the special features of this feast. They also gave names of animals to boys, and names of flowers to girls,

according to the fancies of the father, or the counsels of the soothsayers. Ordinarily, a child received but one name; still, the boys might always gain a second by their bravery, their good qualities, or their defects. This was the case with Moteuczoma I., who was called Ilhuicamina ("the man who casts arrows towards the sky," or "the choleric man").

When the ceremony of the bath was finished, a banquet was given. On these occasions the guests drank a little more than usual, but they did not become intoxicated. They allowed the lights to burn out, and during the four days that intervened between the first and second baths, they took care that the fire might not be extinguished, — an accident which would have been an evil omen. When the child was weaned, that is, in its third year, the guests were again invited to a banquet. Circumcision, as we have said, was not practised among the Aztecs, although it appears to have been a custom of the Totonacs.

Let us remark that the Aztecs were, and still are, sociable to the highest degree, and that they were very fond of feasts and banquets. At these gatherings the place of each guest was determined by his rank, his merit, or his age. Their repasts surprised the Spaniards by the luxury of the dishes, the service, and the linen, by a severe observance of etiquette, and by a refinement of cleanliness unknown to or despised by uncivilized nations.

In marriage, the laws of propriety were greatly respected, and unions between near relatives, except between brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, were prohibited. Marriages were never concluded without the consent of the fathers. When a young man reached the age of twenty or twenty-two years, and a girl the age of seventeen or eighteen, the parents tried to match them, and consulted the soothsayers. Having ascertained the days of the birth of the two young people, the augurs announced whether the desired union would be a happy or an unhappy one. If their prognostications were favorable, "female solicitors," chosen from the most respectable of the relatives of the young man, asked the young woman's father for her. These "solicitors" paid their first visit in the middle of the night; they carried presents to the father and mother, and asked them for their daughter's hand. The first request was always refused, whatever the advantages of the projected union and the desire of the parents to conclude it. The latter, as a matter of form, appeared very loath to lose their daughter. Some days afterwards the "solicitors" returned to the charge, supporting their request by prayers and plausible reasons, enumerating the young man's goods, and informing themselves of those of the young woman. The parents now declared that they were unable to decide before consulting their daughter and their kinsmen. The "solicitors" then withdrew, to return no

more, as the girl's father was required to bring his answer.

If this was favorable, the date for the marriage was fixed. The father and the mother of the girl, having urged her to be faithful and obedient to her husband, and to conduct herself with decorum out of respect for her own family, led her to the home of her father-in-law, to the sound of music. The young man and his relatives, preceded by four women carrying lighted torches, received the future wife at the door of their dwelling. The betrothed offered incense to each other; then the young man, taking the girl by the hand, led her to the hall where the marriage was to be celebrated. The two seated themselves on a new mat in the middle of the room, near a fire that had been prepared for the ceremony. Then a priest attached the skirt of the girl's mantle to that of the young man; this form constituted the marriage contract. Afterwards the bride walked around the hearth seven times; then, returning to the mat, she and her husband incensed the gods; thereupon they exchanged some small presents.

A banquet followed; the newly-married couple ate while sitting on the mat, each carrying the food to the mouth of the other. When the guests, seated apart, began to be heated from the effects of their libations, they went to dance in the court of the house. The couple remained in the same place for four days, never going out, except

at midnight to incense the idols and to offer them meats. They passed these four days in fasting and prayer. Their couch was composed of two new mats covered with pieces of cloth, having a feather, a bit of tiger's skin, and a fine stone, called "chalchihuitl," in the centre. At the four corners, pieces of bamboo and agave-thorns were placed, in order that they might draw blood from their ears and tongues in honor of the gods. The priests charged themselves with the construction of the bed; but the meaning of the jewels, the feathers, and the pieces of bamboo is unknown. Finally, the marriage was consummated. The married couple then put on new costumes which they had presented to each other, and the woman ornamented her head with white feathers, and her feet with red ones. The feast terminated with the presentation of a new dress to each of the guests; the mats, the cloths, the bamboo, and the meats were then taken to the temple and offered in homage to the gods. Owing to a singular superstition, if a bit of charcoal or ashes was found in the bridal chamber, it was regarded as an unfavorable omen, while the discovery of a grain of maize was indicative of prosperity.

These customs, which were followed throughout the entire Aztec empire, were somewhat modified in the neighboring countries. In Ichcatlan, a young man who wished to marry presented himself to the priests. The latter took him to the temple and cut off some of his hair

before the idols; then showing the young man to the people, they exclaimed: "This man wishes to marry." He was then made to descend the steps of the sanctuary, and the first unmarried woman he met became his wife, as if the gods had destined her for him. Of course, on such days, the young girls who did not want the candidate for a husband, took care not to go near the temple. The customs of the Mexicans were followed in the celebration of the union.

Polygamy was permitted among the Aztecs; hence the kings and the nobles had a great many wives. The first one, however, alone had a right to the nuptial ceremonies.

When an Aztec died, after care had been first taken to close his eyes, the masters of burial ceremonies, who were highly honored, were called. Having cut up a number of pieces of papyrus, these officials covered the body of the deceased with them, and then poured a vase of water on his head. They then dressed him in accordance with his condition, his fortune, or the circumstances of his death. If he had been a soldier he was dressed like the idol of Huitzilipochtli, and like that of Xacateuctli if he had been a merchant. The person who died by drowning was dressed like Tlaloc, and those who died from indulgence in liquor were decked with the emblems of Tezcatzoncatl, the god of wine.

A vessel of water was then placed near the dead person, to slake his thirst during his journey

to the other world, and he was furnished with bits of papyrus, whose usage was explained to him by those having charge of the ceremonies. "With this," said one of them, "thou wilt pass between the two contending mountains in safety; with this second thou wilt travel without danger the road guarded by the great serpent; and with this third thou wilt cross the domain of the great crocodile, Xochitonatl, without hindrance." The fourth piece of papyrus was a passport to traverse the seven deserts, the fifth served for the eight hills, and the sixth to defend himself against the north wind; for they believed that the deceased would have to pass through a place in which prevailed a wind so strong that it lifted the stones, and so sharp that it cut like a knife. For the same reason they burned the clothes and arms of the deceased, so that the warmth given out by their combustion might protect him from the cold of this terrible wind.

One of the principal ceremonies consisted in killing a "techichi," — a domestic animal very much like a dog, of an extinct species, — so that he might accompany the dead on his journey. They put a cord around the animal's neck in order that he might be able to cross the deep river of the Nine Waters. The techichi was buried or burned at the same time that his master was, according to the manner of the latter's death.

While the masters of ceremonies burned incense around the funeral pile on which they had

placed the body of the deceased, the priests intoned a funeral hymn. When the body was consumed, its ashes were collected in an earthen vase, at the bottom of which a jewel, of a value proportionate to the fortune of the deceased, was placed to serve him as a heart in the regions he was soon to inhabit. The vase was interred in a deep hole, which for four days was covered with offerings of bread and wine, a custom which the modern Aztecs have not abandoned.

These were the funeral rites of the people of low condition. According to Gomara, when a king fell sick the face of the idols of Huitzilipochtli and Tezcatlipoca were covered with masks, which were not removed until the patient was either cured or dead. As soon as the king expired, the news was published with great pomp, and all the nobles of the kingdom were informed of the fact, in order that they might come to assist at the obsequies.

In the meantime the royal body was placed on costly mats, and his servants mounted guard around him. On the fourth or fifth day, when the nobles, clothed in brilliant costumes, had come together, as well as the slaves who were to assist at the ceremony, the deceased was dressed in some fifteen vestments of different colored cotton, and the body was decked with jewels of gold, silver, and precious stones. An emerald was attached to his lower lip to serve him as a heart; his face was concealed under a mask; he was

then decked with the insignia of the god of the temple in which his ashes were to be deposited. In addition, a part of his hair was cut off, which was placed with the locks he wore in youth. These relics were enclosed in a chest, upon which was placed a bust of stone or wood of the dead monarch to preserve his memory. Then the slave who had been accustomed to assist him in his devotions was killed, in order that the unfortunate being might continue his service in the other world.

The corpse was carried away, escorted by the relatives and the nobles. The wives of the deceased figured in the cortège, filling the air with their lamentations. The nobles carried a large standard of papyrus, the arms of the deceased, and the royal insignia. The priests chanted, but without any accompaniment of instruments.

The first step of the temple having been reached, the high priests and their acolytes came to receive the body; they placed it on a funeral pile of resinous wood covered with incense. While the royal body was consuming, a number of slaves that had belonged to the king, together with those offered by the nobles for this solemnity, were sacrificed. They also sacrificed some of the deformed beings that the king kept in his palace in order that they might amuse their master in the other world; a number of his wives were also killed. The number of victims varied with the importance of the obsequies; according

to the generally accepted calculations it was not far from two hundred, including the techichi, without whom the deceased would not be able to leave the winding paths that lead to the other world.

On the following day the ashes and teeth of the deceased were collected, and then the emerald that had been suspended from his lip; all these relics were placed with his hair in the chest, which became a coffin. For four days offerings of meats were placed on the tomb; on the fifth day other slaves were sacrificed, a ceremony which was repeated on the twentieth, the sixtieth, and the eightieth day. Dating from this moment, throughout the following year, nothing was offered to the dead but rabbits, butterflies, partridges, and other birds; after that bread, wine, incense, flowers, and pieces of bamboo filled with aromatic substances. This anniversary of the death was celebrated for four years. Generally the bodies were burned, and only those of people who drowned themselves or died of dropsy were buried.

The Aztecs had no cemeteries properly speaking; the ashes of the dead were buried near a temple, in the fields, or on mountains on the summits of which they were in the habit of offering sacrifices. The ashes of the kings and of the nobles were, as we have seen, deposited in the towers that surmounted the temples.

In Mexican manuscripts the dead are always represented bundled up, the legs drawn up in

front of the trunk, the knees under the chin. According to the anonymous Conqueror the bodies that were buried were placed in very deep trenches; the corpse was placed on a low chair, with the implements of his trade. Soldiers were interred with a shield and sword; women with a spindle, a broom and culinary vessels; rich people with jewels and gold. Hence, the Spaniards soon began to rifle the tombs, whence they obtained great wealth.

At first, the Chichimecs interred their dead in grottos; afterwards, when they became civilized, they adopted the ceremonies of the Alcolhuas, which were very similar to those of the Aztecs.

The Miztecs preserved only a part of the old customs of the Chichimecs. When one of their chiefs fell sick public prayers were said, and sacrifices were offered to the gods of his family. If the patient got better his recovery was celebrated by feasts; if he died he was still spoken of as if living. One of his slaves, dressed in the clothes of the deceased, was placed before his corpse; the face of this poor wretch was covered with a mask, and during a whole day the same homage that it had been customary to pay the deceased was paid to him. At midnight four chiefs took possession of the body to bury it in a forest or cave, — by way of preference, in one of those considered to be the gates of paradise. The slave who had taken his master's place was then sacrificed, and buried with the insignia of his ephemeral

authority. Every year the anniversary of the birth of the deceased was celebrated with a feast, but his death was never mentioned. The Zapotecs embalmed the bodies of the chiefs of their nation, — a custom that appears to have also been in use among the Chichimecs.

During the long years that I spent in Mexico, I discovered in exploring the Atlantic slope of the Cordilleras a large number of funeral caves. Sometimes an Indian showed them to me, but more frequently chance led me face to face with these narrow openings, which gave but little indication of the wonders they concealed. The Mexican caves, especially those situated midway up the mountain slopes, are difficult of access on account of the vegetation and asperities of the ground; hence it is only with the greatest difficulty that they can be reached. In almost all those I visited, whether large or small, I disinterred small images and vases of terra-cotta. The vases, with few exceptions, contained ashes and charcoal, in the midst of which was found the head of a bird or of a small mammal. Were these ashes the remains of a body that had been burned? I have good reason to think so, for the urns which held them were frequently covered with skulls, and I never came across any skeletons. These were not, I must add, burial-places of the Aztecs, but of one of the nations which had lived before them in Anahuac.

What memories, what useless regrets have these explorations left me! After a rough ascent, my eyes, from the summit of a crater, searched the bottoms of dark gorges, or wandered over the peaks about me which bounded my horizon. Suddenly, among the rocks or trees beyond the ravine I was surveying, a yawning gap appeared. Seized by an unconquerable curiosity, I immediately set out, and it often required more than a day to reach the desired place. How many hours did I lose in looking for it amid the rocks in the midst of grand cypress-trees, whose position I had taken pains to study carefully, and which at close view were confounded in a vexing similarity! Finally, having passed by it twenty times without perceiving it, I suddenly found myself before the sought-for goal. Sometimes the entrance to the grotto was very large, the magnificent vestibule of a mysterious palace; but sometimes also, it was difficult for me to pass through it. I crawled along, the glimmer of the pine-branch which served me for a torch scarcely penetrating the shadows, and painting numbers of many-colored concentric circles in the rare, moist air of the dark cave. What was I going to find in the unknown depths I was sounding, — reptiles, or wild beasts? Panic-stricken, suddenly recalling his superstitions, the Indian who was accompanying me retraced his steps in haste, and I remained alone. There was no noise about me but the sound of my breath, and the crackling

of the resin of my improvised torch. My heart began to beat, and my mind, frightened by the silence and the darkness, created chimerical dangers. Seized with fear myself, I thought of retreating; but at the end of a passage, I suddenly perceived a number of skulls on the ground. Nothing more was required to put to flight the phantoms of my imagination, — to bring me back to reality. Soon, kneeling on the ground, I dug into the earth with my knife, or when necessary with my finger-nails, and relics of olden times — arrow-heads, urns, necklaces, and images of gods — rewarded my boldness.

Often, having traversed the narrow passages, I entered an immense crypt, where I found marvellous stalactites. Rummaging in the most secret corners, I made new discoveries. What archæological wealth I thus brought to light, and then at the moment of departure abandoned for want of means of carrying it away!

The caves of the Cordilleras are vast museums. When roads, or even paths shall cross the almost inaccessible heights which I have visited, the works of the primitive inhabitants of Anahuac, and documents concerning their history will be collected by thousands. But let us leave these relics and the future, and return to the Aztecs of the past.

CHAPTER XI.

EDUCATION. — COUNSELS OF A FATHER TO HIS SON. — COUNSELS OF A MOTHER TO HER DAUGHTER. — PUBLIC SCHOOLS — SEMINARIES.

A WARLIKE and cruel nation, always ready to measure its strength with its neighbors, with the sole aim of despoiling them of their wealth, or of sacrificing them, must, apparently, have cared little for justice. If we remember, in addition to this, that among this people, in consequence of a ferocious fanaticism, the eating of human flesh was looked upon as an act agreeable to the gods, it would seem that all their customs must have been tainted by this barbarism; and yet, — a strange contradiction, — a constant solicitude for justice, and for the general good is found both in the political government of the Aztecs, and in their domestic habits. The picture we are about to paint of the partial civilization, of the arts, and of the laws of this people who seem to have lived only for war, is of a nature to surprise those who would judge them solely by the inhuman sacrifices they offered to their gods.

"The education of its youth," wrote Clavigero, "is indisputably the chief foundation of a State," and it is also that which makes us best acquainted

with a nation's character. Among the Aztecs this education was such as to confound the proud contempt which for so many years caused their conquerors to consider them as hardly rational beings. In fact, it would be difficult to name a people who paid more attention to this point, so important for the strength and happiness of States. It is not to be denied that deplorable superstitions, especially from a humanitarian point of view, often gave a wrong direction to the mind of the Aztec youth; but the zeal of their parents to make them moral was boundless. It is so still.

In Anahuac, all mothers, even the queens, suckled their own children. If a disease rendered this impossible, the child was not intrusted to a foster-mother until her habits and her health had been carefully inquired into. From his earliest years the child was accustomed to hunger, cold, and heat. At the age of five, whether the son of a noble or of the king, he was placed at school. If he was to be educated in the paternal mansion, his father began by teaching him the worship of the gods, and the prayers he had to repeat when he specially desired their aid; he also took him frequently to the temples to arouse in him a fondness for religion.

Every care was taken to inspire children with a horror of vice, with modesty of action, respect for their elders, and love of work. They were made to sleep on a mat, and were furnished with

only enough food to support life. When they reached the age of puberty they were taught the use of arms. If they were sons of soldiers they accompanied their fathers to battle, in order that they might learn the military art and lose all fear of danger. If the father was an artisan he taught the young boy his own trade. The mothers taught their daughters to spin and weave at an early age. Children of both sexes were kept constantly occupied, — a good and healthy rule.

Truth was a virtue specially recommended by parents to their children. If they were detected in a lie their tongues were pricked with agave-thorns. The feet of young girls who were too fond of running around were bound, and a disobedient or quarrelsome child was whipped with nettles, or chastised in a manner proportionate to the fault.

A young Aztec was brought up with such a profound respect for his parents that even a long time after his marriage — and this is still true — he scarcely dared speak in their presence. However, to give an idea of the education which he received, we can do no better than reproduce two documents, frequently quoted, and which cannot be quoted too often; they are the exhortations of a father to his son, and those of a mother to her daughter, — a code of morals which we cannot help admiring: —

"My son," said the father, "thou hast come from the womb of thy mother as a chicken comes

from the egg, and growing like it, thou art preparing to fly in the world, without its being given to us to know how long heaven will grant us the enjoyment of the precious stone we possess in thee. But happen what may, endeavor to live an upright life, ceaselessly praying God to help thee. He created thee, and to him thou belongest. He is thy father, he loves thee even more than I love thee. Let thy thoughts be of him, and address thy sighs to him night and day.

"Revere and salute thy elders, and never show them any sign of contempt. Be not silent to the poor and the unfortunate; but make haste to console them with kind words. Honor every one, but especially thy father and thy mother, to whom thou owest obedience, fear, and service. Take care not to imitate the example of those bad sons who, like brutes devoid of reason, do not respect those who have given them life; who do not listen to their advice, and do not wish to submit to the punishments their elders judge necessary. He who follows the path of these evil-doers will come to a bad end; he will die in despair, thrown into an abyss, or by the claws of wild beasts.

"Never mock at old men, my son, nor at deformed people. Do not mock him whom thou seest commit a fault, and do not throw it in his face. Enter into thyself, and fear lest that which offends thee in others may happen to thyself. Go not whither no one calls thee, and mix not thyself with what does not concern thee. By

thy words, as well as by thy deeds endeavor to prove thy good education. When thou talkest with any one do not take hold of his garments. Do not talk too much, and never interrupt others with thy discourse. If thou hearest any one speak foolishly, if thou art not charged with his conduct, hold thy tongue. If thou shouldst not be silent weigh thy words, and do not expose the fault with arrogance, lest thy lesson be not well received.

"When some one speaks to thee, hear him with attention and respect, without moving thy feet, without biting thy cloak, without spitting, and without getting up every minute if thou art seated; for these actions are signs of levity and of a bad education.

"When thou art at table, eat not too fast, and show no dislike if a dish displeases thee. If a person arrives at thy meal-time, divide thy meal with him and do not watch him as he eats.

"When thou walkest, look whither thou goest, that thou mayst knock against no one. If thou meetest any one in thy way, make room for him. Never pass before thy elders, unless forced by necessity, or unless they order thee to do so. When thou takest thy meal in their company, drink not before they do, and offer them what they need in order to gain their good-will.

"If thou art made a present, accept it with gratitude. If the gift is of much value, be not proud of it, and if it be of small value do not

despise it nor mock at it; fear to wound him who wished to oblige thee. If thou growest rich, become not insolent to the poor, and humble them not; for the gods who have refused them wealth, to give it to thee, might grow angry and take it from thee to favor another therewith. Live by thy work, for thou shalt be only the more happy therefor. I, my son, have fed thee up to this day by my labor; I have not failed in my paternal obligations; I have given thee what was necessary without taking it from any one: do thou in like manner.

"Never lie, for it is a great sin. When thou tellest any one what has been told thee, tell the simple truth, and add nothing thereto. Slander no one, and be silent in regard to the faults thou seest in others, if it is not thy duty to correct them. When thou takest a message, if the one who receives it flies into a passion and speaks ill of the person who sent it, in repeating his words modify their severity, in order that thou mayst not be the cause of a quarrel, nor of a scandal for which thou wouldst have to reproach thyself.

"Lose not thy time in the market, for that is a place in which occasions for excesses are many.

"If thou art offered an office, think that it is to test thee and do not accept immediately; even shouldst thou think thyself better fitted than any one else to fill it, refuse it until thou art forced to accept; so wilt thou be the more highly esteemed.

"Be not dissolute; the gods would be angry with thee, and would cover thee with shame. My son, repress thy sensual appetites, for thou art still young. Wait until the young girl whom the gods have destined for thy wife reaches the right age to marry thee. When that hour has come do not act without the consent of thy parents; thy union would be unhappy.

"Take from no one what is his; thou wouldst become the shame of thy people when thou shouldst be their honor, as a reward for the education they have given thee. If thou art good thy example will confound the wicked. By these counsels I wish to fortify thy heart. Neither despise them nor forget them; thy life and happiness depend on them."

Such were the excellent precepts the Aztec nobles sought to engrave on the mind of their sons. Laborers and artisans added special advice in regard to the exercise of their profession. The counsels which mothers gave their daughters are too wise to be omitted.

"My daughter," said the mother, "child born of my flesh, brought into the world by my pains, fed with my milk, I have done my best to bring thee up well, and thy father has cared for thee and polished thee as if thou wert an emerald, that thou mightst appear as a jewel of virtue in the eyes of men. Strive always to be good; for if thou art not thou wilt be despised, and no one will desire thee for a wife. Life is laborious, and all

our strength is necessary to obtain the goods which the gods send us; thou must, therefore, be neither idle nor negligent, but active in all things. Be cleanly; keep thy house in good order. Give thy husband water that he may wash his hands; and knead the bread of thine own. Wherever thou goest be modest; walk not hastily, and never mock at people whom thou meetest; stare not at them, neither look to the right nor the left, if thou dost not wish thy reputation to suffer. Answer with politeness those who speak to thee or salute thee.

"Employ thy hours in spinning, in weaving, in sewing or embroidering; then thou wilt be esteemed, and thou wilt have wherewith to clothe and feed thyself. Do not sleep far into the day, rest not in the shade, do not take the air, abandon not thyself to idleness; inaction gives birth to slothfulness and other vices.

"When thou workest, think only of the service of the gods and the welfare of thy kinsfolk. If thy father or I call thee, quickly run to see what we want of thee, in order that by delay thou mayst not displease us. Never answer arrogantly, and never show repugnance to doing what thou art commanded. If thou canst not accomplish the task imposed on thee, excuse thyself with humility. If any one else is called and he does not respond, answer in his place; do what thou art commanded, and do it well. Nevertheless, do not offer thyself to perform a task above thy strength.

Deceive no one; the gods see thee. Live in peace with every one. Love every one with reserve, not forgetting what is proper, that every one may love thee.

"Be not miserly with the good things the gods have given thee. If thou seest good things given to others, suspect no evil; for the gods, masters of all things, bestow them on whom they please. If thou wishest others not to injure thee, injure not others.

"Avoid indecent familiarity with men; abandon not thyself to the perverse appetites of thy body, for thou wouldst then be the shame of thy people, and evil would pollute thy soul as mud pollutes water. Do not associate with dissolute, lying, or lazy women; their example would poison thy heart. Take care of thine own; remain at home; wander not about the streets nor in the market-place, for this would be to seek thy ruin. Reflect that vice, like a poisonous plant, is death to him who tastes it, and that when it has taken possession of our souls it is difficult to uproot it. If on the street thou shouldst meet a bold young man who insults thee, pass on, answer him not, heed him not. If he follows thee look not at him; he will depart and leave thee in peace. Enter not another's house except for urgent reason, in order that nothing against thy honor may be thought. If thou goest into the house of thy relatives, salute them respectfully, and then busy thyself; take a spindle or employ thyself in necessary work.

"When thou art married respect thy husband, and eagerly obey him. Do not provoke him, and be neither proud nor whimsical towards him. If he frets thee for any reason do not show thy grief when he commands thee. Later explain to him thy trouble gently, to the end that thou mayst disarm him, and prevent him from grieving thee anew. Quarrel not with him before thine own; the shame would be on thee. If any one comes to visit him be amiable, and receive him the best thou canst. If thy husband be angry be thou calm. If he takes bad care of thy affairs advise him well. But if he cannot take care of them, take care of them thyself, and pay thy workmen promptly. Lose nothing for want of care.

"My daughter, follow the advice I give thee. I am old, I have the experience which life gives. I am thy mother and wish thee well. Engrave my advice on thy heart and thou wilt be happy. If by reason of not having listened to me, or by contemning my teachings some misfortune should happen to thee, it would be thy fault, and thou wouldst suffer therefrom. May the gods help thee!"

In all grave circumstances of life the Aztecs had principles like these, — evidence of a severe morality. They knew them by heart, repeated them constantly, and taught them to their children. Not content with giving them these lessons, at an early age they sent them to the

public schools (*techputcalli*), built near the temples, and in which, during three years they were instructed in religion. The nobles had their children educated in the seminaries (*calmecac*), which were very numerous in the empire. Priests devoted exclusively to the task of instructing the young were ceaselessly occupied in these establishments, and matrons of recognized respectability directed those in which young girls were received. No communication existed between the schools of the two sexes; every violation of this rule was severely punished. We have already related that the young patricians were employed in the immediate service of the sanctuary, while the plebeians were only occupied with domestic cares. However, they all followed the lessons of the professors charged with instructing them in history, painting, music, — the arts that pertained to the class to which they belonged.

It was the duty of the girls charged with cleaning the temple to rise three times in the night to incense the idols. They prepared the meats intended for offerings, and wove all kinds of cloths. The care of the household was confided to them, as much to keep them from idleness as to accustom them to daily labor. They slept in large halls, under the eye of their female guardians, who specially charged them to be modest, and who watched all their actions.

The young girls brought up in these so-called convents were much sought after for wives, as

much on account of their morality as on account of their skill in works suitable to their sex.

When a pupil went to visit his parents, — a thing which rarely happened, — he was always accompanied by several of his fellow-scholars, and by a superior. Having listened to the advice which his father gave him, the young man was immediately taken back to the seminary.

A member of a seminary who did not marry when twenty-two years of age remained forever devoted to the service of the gods. If afterwards he wished to leave his state of celibacy, it was difficult for him to find a wife; and in addition to this, he was looked upon as infamous. In the republic of Tlascala they cut off the hair of young people who did not marry, and that was considered a mark of dishonor.

Among the Aztecs the sons generally adopted the trade of their fathers; trades were thus perpetuated in families. Young men intended for the magistracy were often taken to the tribunals, where they learned the laws of the kingdom, and the practice and forms of justice.

The sons of the kings and of the nobles were under the charge of governors, and long before they entered into possession of the offices they were to fill, they were intrusted with the government of a city or of a district, in order that they might become accustomed to the difficult art of directing men. This wise custom was established as early as the time of the Chichimec kings.

Corporal punishments were very brutal among the Aztecs, who were unacquainted with moderation. We have seen that they punctured with agave-thorns the tongue of the child who was detected in a lie, and that the feet of young girls who were too fond of running about were fettered. In cases of disobedience they pinched boys in many parts of the body, and girls only on the hands. Whips figure in the ideographic paintings; sometimes they were made of nettles. They punished youths by burning their hair, or pricking them with pointed pine-branches.

The descendants of the Aztecs have preserved no traces of this cruelty, this unquenchable thirst for blood, which was the dominant trait of their ancestors. There are no people more submissive, more humane, than the modern Aztec. When his reason is not clouded by drink, he is gentle and kind, not only to his family but to his neighbors. Serious and thoughtful, in his quarrels he never sheds blood, rarely commits a murder, and strange to say, he has not even adopted the duel with knives, of the Spaniards, which seems to be in accordance with his instincts. The Aztec, who delighted in gladiatorial fights and human sacrifices, has even renounced bull-fighting, and he censures the ferocity of those who conquered his fathers.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE. —COURTS AND JUDGES. — LAWS. — PENALTIES. — PRISONS.

THE ancient Aztecs had many different classes of magistrates and courts for the administration of justice. In Mexico, as well as in the principal cities of the empire there was a supreme judge, called "Cihuacoatl," so powerful that there was no appeal from his judgment even to the king. This magistrate, who was only occupied with criminal affairs, appointed the inferior judges; he also verified the accounts of the tax-collectors.

Below this sort of viceroy, there was a tribunal composed of three judges, the first of whom was distinguished as the "tlacaltecatl." This tribunal was a court of first and second resort in civil and criminal cases; it directed a certain number of the police officers, and held a daily session in a hall of the "public house." There the judges heard the litigants with wonderful patience, examined the cases rapidly, and rendered judgments in accordance with the laws. If it was a civil case there was no appeal; if a criminal proceeding, it was submitted to the Cihuacoatl. In the

Aztec empire magistrates were treated with great consideration, for they were regarded as representatives of the king.

In each quarter of the city, a lieutenant of tribunal, elected by his fellow-citizens, first judged the cases in his district, and explained his decrees to the Cihuacoatl. Below him were commissioners also elected by the people. These commissioners pronounced no judgments; they simply watched over the maintenance of order. Legal notices were served by couriers; police officers made arrests.

In the kingdom of Alcolhuacan, justice was administered in the six principal cities. The judges were required to sit in court from sunrise to sunset, and to take their meals in the audience-hall, in order to be free from family cares, and thus to be beyond the reach of all seduction. Like the Aztec judges, they owned lands, and slaves charged with cultivating them. This property, which was inalienable, belonged to the office and not to the man.

In grave matters, at least in the capital, the judges gave no decrees until they had advised with the king; they met and consulted with him every twentieth day to settle pending cases. If the cases were too complicated they were reserved for a still more solemn session which took place every eighty days, and at which the differences were settled. Then the king pronounced judgment by drawing a line across the painted

face of the accused with an arrow, whereupon the verdict was immediately executed.

The Aztecs probably pleaded their own cases, for we do not know whether they had lawyers. In criminal cases the accuser could make no charge unless supported by witnesses, but the accused had a right to defend himself under oath. In cases concerning the boundaries of landed property recourse was had to the official paintings, which took the place of authentic writings.

It was the duty of magistrates to decide in accordance with the laws of the kingdom, conforming to the texts formulated in the paintings. Among the Aztecs the laws were at first made by the priests, and subsequently by the nobility. From the reign of Itzacoatl, the sovereigns became the legislators of the nation; and, while they governed with their earlier powers, they carefully superintended the execution of the laws promulgated by themselves or by their predecessors. In the last years of the monarchy, despotism subverted justice to its whims, and favoritism took the place of equity.

We shall now quote some of the laws in force among the Aztecs at the time of the arrival of the Spaniards. In some we shall find traits of wisdom, and of humanity, and an ardent zeal for morality; in others, a severity, a harshness, that often degenerates into cruelty. But it must not be forgotten that Mexican lawgivers had to govern rude men, accustomed to despise physical suffering, and

whom they could not keep within the bounds of duty, except by striking them with terror.

Let us begin with the political laws: —

A traitor to the king or to the State was quartered; those of his relatives who had known of his designs and had not discovered them, were made slaves.

The man who usurped the insignia of the king, or of the Cihuacoatl, was killed, and his property confiscated; his wife and sons were imprisoned.

The person who misused an ambassador, a minister, or a courier, was punished with death. But neither the ambassador nor the courier could leave the road prescribed for them without losing their inviolability.

They condemned to death those who excited the people to revolt, or who displaced or destroyed the boundaries of landed property. The same penalty was inflicted on judges who pronounced an unjust sentence or one contrary to the laws, and on those who made an inexact report to the king or to the supreme magistrate, or who allowed themselves to be corrupted with presents.

The man who in war attacked the enemy without the order of his leader, or who abandoned his flag, was beheaded.

Whoever altered the measures established by the magistrates was punished with death; the execution immediately followed the sentence.

We shall now give some of the laws relating to civil matters: —

The murderer was punished with death, even if his victim was his slave. A husband who killed his wife when he discovered her in adultery was executed; for it was considered that he had usurped the rights of the magistrates, who alone were authorized to judge and inflict punishment. Adultery was punished with death, and the parties thereto, after being stoned, had their heads crushed. Intercourse between a married man and an unmarried girl was not regarded as adultery; which proves that greater conjugal fidelity was required of a woman than of a man. The adulterer was punished throughout the empire, but in some cities more severely than in others. In Ichcatlan the adulteress was taken before the court; if the proofs of her guilt were convincing, she was quartered forthwith, and the judges divided her members among them. In Istepec, the law ordered the husband to cut off the nose and ears of his unfaithful wife. The husband who, knowing the irregularities of his wife, continued to cohabit with her, was punished with death.

A man could not repudiate his wife without the authorization of the magistrates. He was obliged to appear before them and tell his grievances. The judges exhorted him to concord, and tried to dissuade him; if he persisted in his intention, and if his motives were good, he was allowed to act as he saw fit, but his divorce was not looked upon with favor. Once separated he could never take back the woman he had repudiated.

Incest among blood relations of the first degree was punished with death. Marriages between relatives was severely prohibited, except between brother-in-law and sister-in-law, as we have already noted. Among the Aztecs, as among the Hebrews, a man often married his brother's widow when she had children. On the borders of the empire the nobles at times married their stepmother, if she had had no child. In Mexico these unions were regarded as incestuous, and punished as such.

A layman convicted of a crime against nature was hanged; the culprit, if a priest, was burned alive. Among all the nations of Anahuac, the laws were merciless in regard to those crimes reputed abominable.

The priest who, when connected with a temple, abused a young girl was degraded and disgraced.

The Aztecs singed the hair of courtesans with burning branches of pine, and smeared their heads with the resin of the same tree. The higher the class to which these unfortunates belonged, the more severe was the punishment they suffered.

A woman who dressed herself in man's clothes, or a man who dressed himself as a woman, was punished with death.

A petty thief was simply required to return what he had stolen; this custom still exists. But if the amount was large the culprit became the slave of the person he had robbed. If the stolen article had been destroyed, and the thief had no

other possessions, he was stoned. If the stolen article was of gold, or was a jewel, the thief, having first been led about the streets of the city, was sacrificed at the feast which the silversmiths and jewellers offered to the god Xipe. The person who appropriated a certain number of ears of corn, or who took a useful plant from the field, became the slave of the owner of the property. Poor travellers, however, were allowed to gather, while on their journey, whatever fruits or corn they required to satisfy their hunger.

The man who stole anything in the market was subjected to the punishment of the bastinado. At the present day he receives a number of blows with the flat side of a sabre. The theft of military standards was punished with death. The man who, meeting lost children, sold them as if they were his own, lost his liberty and his goods. Half of his property went to his victims, and the other half served to indemnify the purchasers for the amount they had paid for them. If there were several guilty parties, all suffered the same punishment. A man that sold lands of which he was a simple tenant was treated in the same manner.

Guardians who rendered false accounts were hanged, — a fate which also befell young people who spent the paternal inheritance to satisfy their vices; since it was regarded as a crime to squander the fortune amassed by the labors of their fathers.

The Aztecs sacrificed to the gods those who made use of witchcraft, and drunkenness in young people was a capital crime. If the culprit was a young man, he died under the rod; if a young girl, she was stoned. In men of mature age this crime was punished severely, but not with death. If the culprit belonged to the nobility, he was deprived of his title, and he remained disgraced; if a plebeian, his hair was cut off, — a dreaded punishment, — and his dwelling was destroyed; since they regarded a man who willingly deprived himself of reason as unfit to live among men. Nevertheless, they permitted drunkenness on the occasion of wedding banquets and other *fêtes*, on condition that the drinkers should not show themselves in public. This law did not apply to those who had passed their sixtieth year, — an age at which discretion in the matter of drink was allowed.

In spite of the severity of these last laws, the Aztecs did not consider themselves as responsible for evil deeds committed when they were intoxicated; and Sahagun states that they became intoxicated, or feigned drunkenness to justify themselves for the crimes they were dragged into. In this respect they surpassed our experts in medical jurisprudence, who now ask pardon for the greatest criminals in the name of alcoholism, — as if man is not free to preserve his sobriety. The Mexican laws show us a just and moral people, protecting the family, manners, property, and

liberty of conscience, and requiring that respect for authority without which all government becomes impossible. Do we not find in this fruitful germs of civilization?

Slavery, in very mild forms, existed among the Aztecs, who had three classes of slaves, — prisoners-of-war, citizens who sold themselves, and criminals deprived of their liberty as a punishment.

It was provided that the sale of a slave should be made before four witnesses of age, and the contract was publicly ratified. The slave might possess property, acquire lands, and purchase slaves himself to serve him, without his master being able to prevent him from employing them. Slavery was not hereditary in Anahuac; every man was born free, even the children of slaves. If a free man had illicit intercourse with a slave, who died while *enceinte*, the guilty one became the property of the owner of the woman.

The poor sold one or more of their children to alleviate their poverty, and every free man had a right to sell his liberty for the same reason. Masters could not sell a slave without his consent. Fugitive, refractory, or vicious slaves were warned two or three times by their masters, who, for their future justification, always had witnesses to their good counsels. When the slave did not improve, a wooden collar was placed about his neck, and he was sold in the public market. If the slave was still rebellious after having changed masters three times, he was sold for the public

sacrifices; this, however, was rarely done. The slave "with the collar" who fled from the house of his master and took refuge in the king's palace became free. Those who prevented him from reaching this asylum, with the exception of his master and his master's sons, lost their liberty.

Those who sold themselves were ordinarily gamblers who satisfied their passion at the price of their independence, or indolent people who wished to live in idleness, or courtesans fond of dress. Slavery was not repugnant to the Aztecs, for the condition of the slaves was not at all severe or infamous. They were well-treated, worked moderately, and often were freed on the death of their master.

According to Sahagun, when a cycle was drawing to its close the people and the nobles, in consequence of a superstition, were seized by a fear of famine. If these fears were realized, the head of a family often engaged to perpetually furnish one of the great feudatories with one or more slaves in exchange for provisions. On such occasions he gave him one of his children, and at a stated period took the child back, putting one of his brothers in his place. A number of poor families contracted these obligations in the year of famine, 1505; Moteuczoma II. from a feeling of justice, liberated all slaves of noble origin.

The Aztec laws did not find such genuine

favor in all parts of the empire that there were not frequent variations from them. The Mexicans, like the Romans, did not force the nations whom they conquered to adopt their gods, their laws, or to speak their language.

The system of laws of the kingdom of Alcolhua closely resembled that of its allies, but it was, if anything, still more severe.

According to the laws promulgated by the celebrated poet and philosopher-king, Nezahualcoyotl, the thief was dragged through the streets, then strangled, and the murderer beheaded. The person convicted of exciting discord between two States was tied to a tree and burned alive. A person who became intoxicated, if he belonged to the nobility, was strangled and his body thrown into a lake or river; if a plebeian, he lost his liberty, but it was only on the second offence that he was punished with death. A lawgiver, having been asked why he was more severe towards a noble than towards a plebeian, answered: "It is because the crime of the first is more serious, since he ought to show a good example." The same king ordered that historians who recorded facts incorrectly in their paintings should be punished with death.

The Tlascaltecs adopted this same code to a great extent. Among them the son who was wanting in respect for his father was punished with death or exiled. The crimes which the civilized nations of Anahuac punished with the

greatest severity were homicide, theft, perjury, and adultery.

Hanging seems to have been the most dishonorable punishment inflicted on evil-doers by the Mexican legislators. Exile was also regarded as infamous, for it supposed that the culprit was guilty of a contagious vice. The whip, in spite of the assertions of some historians, was only used to punish children.

There were two sorts of prisons in the empire; some called "teilpiloyan," intended for debtors who refused to pay, and for people convicted of crimes not punishable with death; the others, "cuauhcalli," which were smaller and constructed in the form of a cage with narrow doors, served for prisoners reserved for the sacrifices, and for those condemned to death. Little food was given to the latter, with the intention of making them feel the bitterness of the punishment in advance. On the contrary, prisoners-of-war were abundantly fed, so that they might remain strong and healthy until the hour of sacrifice. If, through the negligence of the guards, a prisoner escaped, the inhabitants of the quarter in which the prison was situated paid the owner of the fugitive a certain number of cotton garments.

CHAPTER XIII.

MILITARY INSTITUTIONS. — THE ARMY AND ITS CHIEFS. — OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE ARMS. — STANDARDS. — DECLARATION OF WAR. — BEGINNING OF A CAMPAIGN. — FORTIFICATIONS.

IN the Mexican empire, which was essentially an empire of conquerors, no profession was held in higher esteem than that of arms. We have seen that the god of war was the most highly venerated of all the Aztec divinities, and that he was the protecting deity of the nation. We have also seen that no prince ever obtained the supreme power without first having given proofs of valor or of military talent, and unless he merited the title of general. Once elected king he could not assume the diadem until he had captured the prisoners it was necessary for him to sacrifice on the occasion of his coronation.

All the Aztec kings from Itzacoatl to Cuauhtemotzin, passed from the command of the army to the throne. The great esteem professed by the Mexicans for the military career induced them to train their sons to be courageous, and to harden them from childhood for the fatigues of war. For them the happiest souls in the other world were the souls of warriors who had died in defending their

country. This high idea of the glory of arms formed the heroes that rendered the Aztec nation illustrious, and made it victorious everywhere. Thus from the humblest origin it rapidly raised itself to the first rank, and from the shores of the lake near which it was built, emerging from a state of servitude, it soon extended its authority over all the countries situated between the two oceans.

The highest military dignity was that of general; but, under this appellation four classes of leaders, possessing special insignia, were included. The most important of these chiefs was called by the name of Tlacochacatl ("prince of arrows"). We do not know what relations he had with the other generals, for the earliest historians, neglecting the question of rank, have confounded all grades. After these dignitaries came the captains, each of whom commanded from two to three hundred men.

To reward the officers and excite their emulation, the Mexicans created three military orders, under the denominations of Achcauhtin ("princes"); Cuauhtin ("eagles"); Oceotl ("tigers"). The most distinguished among the princes were those who besides gained the title of Cuachictin ("commander of the eagles"). These then wore their hair raised on the top of their heads by means of a red cord, from which hung as many tassels as they had accomplished feats in war. After twenty brilliant actions they had a right to shave their

heads, and then to paint half of the face red and the other half yellow. These signs of distinction were so highly appreciated that not only the generals, but the kings were proud to wear them. Moteuczoma II. and Tizoc belonged to this order, — a fact shown by their portraits.

The Tigers, as a distinctive sign, wore on their backs an armor of cotton painted in a manner to resemble the skin of the animal whose name they bore. Military insignia were only worn when in the field; at court all the clothes were of the same kind, differing only in color.

Young men who took the field for the first time wore nothing but large coarse coats of cloth made of agave-fibre. This rule was so rigorously observed that the king's own sons had to give proofs of their valor before they were authorized to exchange this clothing for any other.

Those who possessed a military order had the right, when they were on guard, to lodge in the palace of the king. They were allowed to use golden utensils, to clothe themselves with the finest materials, and to wear girdles lighter than those of the people, — a privilege that was never granted to soldiers until they had merited advancement. A garment of a special form (*ilacatziuhque*) was the reward of those soldiers who, seeing the army weaken, succeeded in reviving its courage by their words or their example.

In war, the king wore, besides this armor, special insignia; on his feet he wore low boots,

ornamented with plates of gold, and on his arms bracelets inlaid with fine stones. He suspended emeralds mounted in gold from his lower lip, and from his ears. Around his neck he placed a chain made of gold and diamonds, and on his head a bunch of magnificent feathers (*quiatchath*).

The offensive and defensive arms which the Mexicans, as well as the other nations of Anahuac used, were of great variety. Among the defensive arms was the "chimalli" (fig. 15), a sort of shield common to both officers and soldiers. They were made of various materials and of different shapes, but the round form prevailed. Generally they were made of flexible pieces of bamboo, held in place by coarse cotton thread; those of the nobles were covered with feathers or leaves of gold. Others consisted of a simple tortoise-shell ornamented with copper, silver, or gold, according to the rank or fortune of its owner. There were some large enough to cover the entire body; by means of a mechanism somewhat resembling that of our umbrellas, they could be shut up and carried under the arm. Others, of small dimensions, decorated with feathers, and more ornamental than useful, were used in the mimic combats of the dances.

One of the defensive arms of the officers consisted in a coat of cotton two fingers thick, which resisted arrows so well that the Spaniards hastened to adopt it. Over this cuirass (*ichcahuipilli*), which covered only half the body, another,

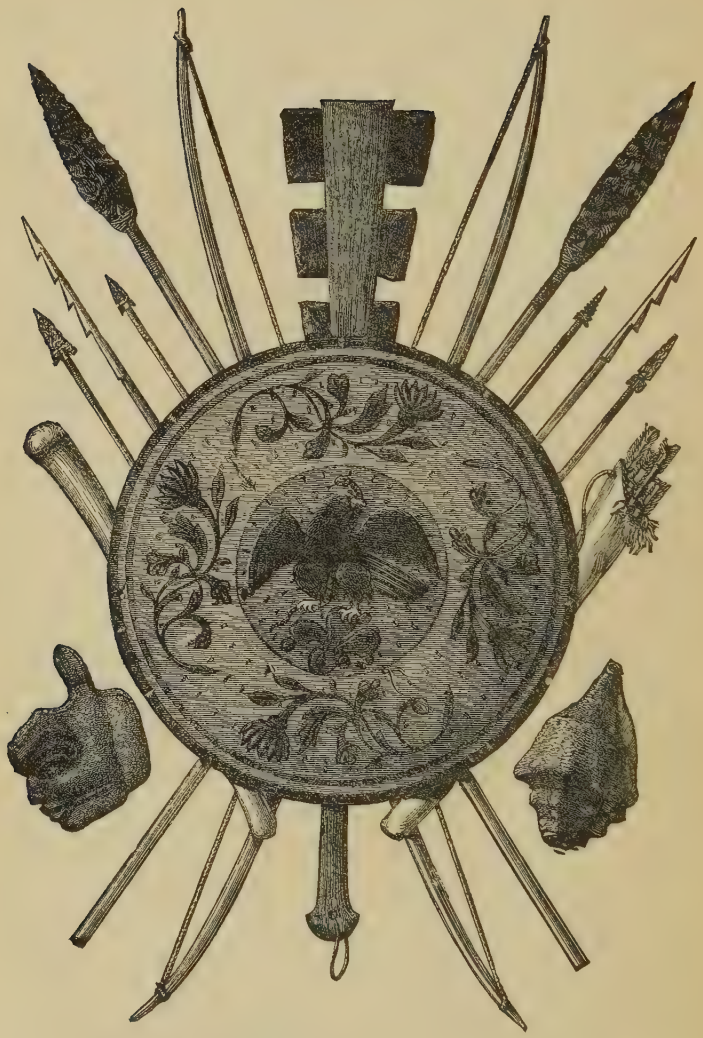


Fig. 15. — Offensive and Defensive Arms of the Aztecs. (Museum of Trocadero.)

ornamented with different-colored feathers, long enough to protect the fore-arms and the thighs, was placed. The nobles often put one of these

FIG. 16. — TERRA-COTTA HEAD OF SOLDIER, WITH HELMET. (COLLECTION OF THE AUTHOR.)

garments of feathers over a cuirass formed of plates of gold and of silver; and this armor, impenetrable to arrows, at a later date resisted the swords and pikes of the Europeans. The officers

wore wooden casques, representing the head of an eagle, of a tiger, or of a serpent, with the mouth open and the teeth salient, for the purpose of terrifying the enemy (fig. 16). These helmets were surmounted with large plumes, intended to make the stature of the wearer appear greater. The simple soldiers were naked, their loins surrounded with the girdle (*maxatl*) required by decency; they supplied the place of clothes by painting their bodies in different colors.

The offensive arms were the bow, the sling, the tomahawk, the lance, the sword, and the javelin. The bow (*tlahuitolli*) was made of flexible wood; its string, of tendons of animals, or of deer-skin braided. Sometimes these arms were of such dimensions that the cord was five feet in length. For arrows (*mitl*) they used rods to the extremity of which was fixed a pointed bone, a fish-bone, or heads made of flint or obsidian. The Mexicans practised the use of the bow from their childhood; and, stimulated by the rewards which their teachers or fathers gave them, became wonderfully expert in its use. The inhabitants of Tehuacan, among others, were renowned for their skill in shooting three or four arrows at the same time. At the present time the barbarous Indians of the frontiers still use the bow with fearful dexterity. None of the nations of Anahuac, with the exception of the Seris, a tribe of Senove, ever made use of poisoned arrows. This was doubtless owing to the fact that their

main object was to secure prisoners for the sacrifices.

The "macahuitl" which took the place of the sword in the hands of the Aztecs, was made of a stick three feet long, armed on its two sides with sharp plates of obsidian fixed with gum-lac. These plates, four fingers broad and two long, were equal in thickness to the old sword blades. They cut so well that the anonymous Conqueror relates having seen an Aztec open the breast of a horse with a single stroke of his sword. But this weapon soon became blunt and useless. The soldiers carried it attached to the arm in order that it might not escape from their hands when they struck with it (fig. 15).

The Mexican pikes were armed with points of stone or copper, instead of iron. The Chinantecs, and many other peoples of the country of Chiapan, used pikes eighteen feet long, which Cortez afterwards used against the cavalry of his rival, Panfilo Narvaez.

The "tlacochtli," dart or javelin, was a stake, of which the point, hardened in the fire, sometimes ended in a stone, a bone, or a copper head. The end of the dart was often divided into three barbs; hence it was a terrible weapon. It was thrown with a cord attached to it, so that it might be drawn back when it had struck an enemy. The Spaniards feared this weapon more than any other, for it was often thrown with such force that it went through a man's body (fig. 15).

In war the soldiers generally were armed with a sword, a bow, a dart, and a sling. It is to be noticed that none of the peoples of Anahuac made use of the axe as a weapon of war.

The Aztecs had standards more like the *signum* of the Romans than like our flags. These were staffs eight or ten feet high, crowned with the arms or the insignia of the State, represented by means of feathers. The insignia of the Mexican empire was an eagle ready to swoop down upon a bird. The standard taken by Cortez himself, in the famous battle of Otompan, represented a golden net, probably the emblem of one of the cities built on the shores of the lake of Tezcoco.

Besides the principal standard of the army, each company had one which, together with the color of the feathers with which its chiefs decorated themselves, served to distinguish it. The standard of the army was carried by the general, those of the companies by an officer. The latter attached the staff so firmly to his shoulder that no one could take it without killing the bearer. The Aztecs always placed the principal standard in the midst of the soldiers; the Tlascaltecs had it carried by the advance-guard while on the march, and by the rear-guard in battle.

The military music of the Aztecs, more noisy than harmonious, was produced by drums, trumpets, and conchs, which gave forth shrill sounds. Bernal Diaz, a long time after the siege of Mexico,

recalled with terror the lugubrious sounds of the trumpet of Cuautemotzin.

Before every declaration of war the council of the king examined its cause, which was generally the rebellion of a city or of a province, or a desire to avenge the assassination of a courier or of a subject of the emperor, or an insult offered to an ambassador. If there was reason to complain of the governor of a province, he was taken to Mexico to be punished. If the people took part in a revolt, satisfaction was asked of them, in the name of the king, and if they humbled themselves they were pardoned. If, on the contrary, they answered arrogantly, refused to submit, and insulted the messengers sent to them, the council deliberated; then war having been decided upon, the generals were advised of it. Sometimes the king, the better to justify his conduct, despatched three ambassadors successively to the factions. The first addressed himself to the head of the guilty city or nation, demanded satisfaction, and fixed the time at which a reply was to be given, under pain of being treated as an enemy. The second ambassador addressed himself to the nobility, praying them to induce their head to escape, by his submission, the punishment that awaited him. Lastly, the third ambassador addressed himself to the people, and explained the causes of war to them. The reasons advanced by the ambassadors were often so efficacious, and they set forth the advantages of peace and the disadvantages of war

so well, that a reconciliation was effected. The ambassadors frequently carried an idol of Huitzilipochtli with them, and demanded that it should be admitted by the rebels among the number of their gods. If the malcontents believed themselves capable of resisting, they refused this demand and sent back the strange idol. But if they considered themselves too weak they placed the idol among those of strange gods, made presents of feathers, gold, and jewels to the ambassadors, and submitted.

War having been decided upon, it was immediately made known to the enemy, that they might prepare themselves; for the Aztecs believed it cowardly and unworthy of valiant men to surprise an enemy. Nevertheless, they sent spies among them, in order that they might give an account of the number, the efficiency, and the movements of their troops. When these spies furnished useful information they were generously rewarded.

Finally, after having offered many sacrifices to the god of war, and to the divinities of the State or of the city to be attacked, for the purpose of securing their good-will, the army placed itself on the march in companies. If it was large, it was divided into corps of eight thousand men, commanded by a general.

"It is one of the most beautiful things in the world, to see them set out for war," said the anonymous Conqueror, in speaking of the Aztecs. "They march admirably, their bearing is magnificent,

and they present the finest appearance imaginable. They have soldiers of an extraordinary bravery, who die with the greatest intrepidity. While fighting, they sing, dance, hiss, and utter cries that inspire terror."

The place where the first battle was fought was a field reserved in each province for that purpose. The fight, as we have just seen, began with the noise of instruments, with cries and hisses. In the army of Tezcoco, the king or the general gave the signal for the fight by beating on a little drum suspended from his shoulder. The first shock was furious, but the entire army did not take part in it; certain of the corps were held in reserve for use in cases of urgency. Sometimes the battle began with a shower of arrows, darts, and stones; then, these arms having been spent, the tomahawks, pikes, and swords were called into service. The chiefs occupied themselves in keeping their troops in order, in defending the standard, and in having the dead and wounded carried away, in order to hide them from the sight of the enemy. There were soldiers set apart for this duty.

Sometimes the Aztecs made use of stratagem and had resort to ambush. They concealed themselves in trenches hastily dug, as the Spaniards had occasion to learn to their cost. They also often pretended to beat a retreat to draw the enemy towards a dangerous place, and attacked his rear guard with fresh troops. In battle they

were more anxious to capture prisoners than to kill; hence the valor of soldiers was not measured by the number of enemies they killed on the field of battle, but by the number of prisoners they took. This custom was of much help to the Spaniards during the celebrated and terrible night in which they were obliged to abandon Mexico. When their general was killed, or their standard taken, the Mexicans, seized by a superstitious panic, fled, and no human power could control them.

The battle ended, the victors celebrated their triumph by cries of joy, and the general rewarded the officers and the soldiers who presented prisoners to him. When the king himself captured one of the enemy, all the provinces sent him presents. The unhappy being on whom this misfortune fell was richly dressed; he was carried on a litter as far as Mexico, where the inhabitants, with music at their head, came to meet him. The day for his death having arrived, the royal prisoner, clothed in the insignia of the sun, was led to the foot of the sacrificial altar, where he died by the hand of the high-priest. The victim dead, the high-priest sprinkled the four cardinal points with blood; then he presented a vase of it to the king, who poured it on the idols of the temple, in thankfulness for the victory gained over the enemy. The head of the corpse was fixed to the extremity of a pole, the skin was dried, to be filled with

cotton, and this frightful trophy was hung up in one of the halls of the palace as an adulatory souvenir of the glorious act of the sovereign.

When a city was on the point of being besieged, the women, the children, and the sick were immediately sent into another city, or into the woods, in order to place them out of reach of the enemy, and also to prevent a useless consumption of food.

Many systems of fortifications were in use for the defence of cities, — such as walls, ramparts, parapets, stockades, ditches, and trenches. The city of Cuauhquichollan was surrounded by a wall of stone and mortar, twenty feet high and twelve feet broad.

The conquering Spaniards, who have described the fortifications of this city, mention many other works of the same nature, among which the most remarkable was that built by the Tlaxcaltecs, to protect themselves against the invasions of the Mexicans. This work consisted of a wall constructed in such a manner that it connected two mountains ; it was six miles long, eight feet high, and eighteen feet broad. It was made of stones united by a cement of excessive hardness. It had but one opening, eight feet wide, which consisted of a prolongation in the form of a semicircle. Ruins of this great work may still be seen.

There also exists, near the village of Molcaxac, an old fortress, built on the summit of a moun-

tain, and defended by four circles of walls. In the neighborhood there are a number of ramparts, and on a hill two miles distant, are the ruins of a vast city, the inhabitants of which have left no traces in history. At a distance of twenty miles from Cordova, I visited the antique fortress of Huatusco, surrounded by walls, and which can be entered only by climbing over high ramparts. In the neighborhood of this building, overrun with briers, many curious statues were formerly found.

In attacks on fortified places, the archers and soldiers armed with slings drove the besieged from the walls; the latter, when the moment for the assault came, rained stones and heavy pieces of wood upon the enemy. Experts in everything that pertained to war, the Aztecs used mines, strewed the roads with obstacles, and barricaded the defiles.

Mexico, already strong, owing to its position on a lake, quickly became impregnable, thanks to the industry of its inhabitants. It could be entered only by the causeways crossing the lake; — roads bristling with parapets, and broken by ditches furnished with drawbridges. A number of the Spaniards and Tlaxcaltecs perished at the bottom of these trenches during the night of the first of July, 1521. These defences held the army of Cortez in check a long time, and he would probably never have been able to force them without the aid of the brigantines which he had

constructed. To defend the city from attacks by water, thousands of boats were necessary; and the Mexicans often exercised themselves in this sort of battle.

But the strongest fortifications of Mexico were its temples,—especially the most important, which resembled a citadel. Its surrounding walls, its four arsenals well provided with offensive and defensive arms, its architectural arrangement, which rendered it difficult of approach, prove that in building it, its founders had the defence of the city in mind, as well as the worship of the gods. Moreover, we know that the temples became fortresses when the enemy had succeeded in entering a city. From the top of them arrows, darts, and stones were showered upon him. As an example, we recall the heroic siege sustained by five hundred Mexican nobles, on the top of the grand temple of Mexico, in which Cortez, at last, was obliged to attack them in person.

CHAPTER XIV.

AGRICULTURE. — CHINAMPAS, OR FLOATING ISLANDS. — SOWING THE SEED. — GARDENS. — DOMESTIC ANIMALS. — COCHINEAL. — HUNTING. — FISHING. — COMMERCE. — MARKETS. — ROADS. — BRIDGES.

IN spite of the predilection of the Aztecs for the profession of arms, they neglected none of the useful trades, and they devoted special attention to agriculture. They, like all the nations of Anahuac, practised it at an early date. It is known that, during the long journey which, about the year 1160, brought the Aztecs from their primitive country as far as the shores of the lake where they founded their capital, they tilled the soil wherever they sojourned, and lived upon the crops. Conquered by the Colhuas and the Tepanecs, and shut up in the islands of their lake, they neglected agriculture for many years for want of land. At last, made ingenious by necessity, they invented the floating islands.

Their method of making these isles was very simple. With the aid of branches, roots, aquatic plants, and other light materials, they made a net-work sufficiently solid, then on this base they spread a bed of sea-weed, which they covered with the wet earth from the lake. These

little islands, which were of the form of a parallelogram, were generally forty-eight feet long and eighteen broad, and they were about a foot above the surface of the lake. These were the first fields which the Aztecs had after the foundation of their capital, — fields on which they cultivated maize, allspice, and the vegetables they needed.

These movable gardens, called "chinampas," multiplied, and many of them were used in the cultivation of flowers and aromatic plants. This usage has been perpetuated, and to-day, as in the time of Moteuczoma, every morning a number of boats laden with vegetables and fruits gathered on these floating islands, the earth of which has no need of rain, arrive in Mexico by the canal which runs parallel with the promenade de la Viga. A hut is often built on these islands, which are ornamented with shrubbery. Formerly, when the proprietor desired a change of location, to escape a disagreeable neighbor, or to be near his relatives, he got into his canoe, and towed his field wherever he wished. In our day, the falling of the waters of the lake fixes the chinampas to the muddy bottom; they have become stationary.

As soon as the Mexicans had shaken off the yoke of the Tepanecs, their conquests furnished them lands so that they could apply themselves to agriculture. Having no knowledge of the plow, and possessing no domestic animal strong enough to help them in their work, they supplied this want by incessant labor, with the aid of a very

primitive instrument. For digging the soil they used a sort of copper mattock furnished with a handle, and to cut down trees, they employed a hatchet likewise made of copper, somewhat like our own. Historians have neglected to describe the other implements which were used.

To irrigate their fields they used the water of streams which descended from the mountains. They knew how to build dikes, and to divide the precious liquid by small canals, in such a way as to make the best possible use of it. They allowed their lands to rest and become covered with weeds, which they burned during the dry months, to replace the salts carried away by the rains. They surrounded their fields with stone walls, or agave hedges, — impenetrable barriers still in use.

Their manner of sowing maize is still in vogue among their descendants. Provided with a sharp stick, the point of which has been hardened in the fire, the sower makes a hole in the ground, deposits in it one or two grains of maize, which he takes from a pouch made of rushes, suspended from his shoulder, and covers them with earth with his foot. He advances with a longer or shorter step, according to the nature of the ground, walking in a straight line as far as the end of the field, to return again to the other end. The parallel lines which he traces are so straight that it seems as if they were made with a string. This way of sowing, although slow, is very productive, for it measures the seed in accordance

with the quality of the soil, and allows none of it to be lost. When the plant reaches a certain height its foot is covered with earth, in order to fortify it and enable it to resist the wind. The ear having reached maturity, the stalk which supports it is broken, and it is allowed to dry in the sun.

Women, among the ancient Mexicans as well as among the modern, helped their husbands in agricultural labors. The man dug, sowed, and harvested; the woman shelled the maize and cleaned the grain.

The Mexicans had threshing floors for this last operation, and granaries for the storage of the harvests. They constructed these granaries with the trunks of "oyamel" (a sort of pine with a smooth bark), which they placed one above the other, enclosing a square space. When this building reached the proper height, they covered it with new trunks, and sheltered it from the rain with a roof. These granaries had but two openings: a narrow one in the lower part; the other, larger, at their upper part. Some of them were large enough to contain as many as six thousand sacks of maize. These granaries are still used at many places in the Mexican republic, and some are so old that they appear to have been constructed before the arrival of the Spaniards. In showing me these ancient storehouses, the Mexican farmers have often told me that grain is preserved in them better than in those copied from European models.

Near sowed fields, they built small towers of wood, in which a man, protected from the sun and rain, watched the birds and drove them away with a sling. This task is now confided to children; for the Mexican farmer, at the present time as in the past, is obliged to ceaselessly defend his crops against clouds of pillaging birds. Parrots attack maize, toucans fruits, grosbeaks the sweet pods of cotton-plants, and sparrows wheat.

The Aztecs were fond of gardens; they filled them with fruit-trees carefully planted in rows, with medicinal plants, and above all, with flowers. The last they cultivated, not only from taste, but in consequence of their custom of frequently offering bouquets to the king, the lords, and the ambassadors, and also of ornamenting their temples and private oratories with them. Among these gardens, those of the crown in Mexico and Tezcoco were celebrated. After the taking of Mexico, the Spaniards greatly admired that of a lord of Iztalapan, as much on account of its arrangement, as on account of the dimensions of the trees that ornamented it. This orchard was divided into squares, and it contained plants which delighted the senses. Between these squares were paths formed by fruit-trees and flowering-bushes. The ground was furrowed by small canals filled with water from the lake, and one of them was large enough to float a boat. In the middle of this park, there was a square pond, 1600 feet in circumference, inhabited by

innumerable aquatic birds. This property, which is mentioned by Cortez and Bernal Diaz, had been established by Cuitlahuatzin, brother and successor of Moteuczoma II., who, according to the testimony of Dr. Hernandez, had enriched it with exotic trees.

But the conquerors say the most magnificent of these gardens was that of Huaxtepec. It was six miles in circumference, and was crossed by a river. The Spaniards preserved it for a long time, and in it they cultivated the medicinal plants necessary for the hospital they had founded.

The Aztecs carefully watched over the economy of the forests, from which they obtained their wood for burning and building. On the other hand, I have often heard the heedlessness of the Spaniards deplored, in allowing the forests to be cut from a part of the valley of Anahuac, and thus sacrificing the public good to that of a few individuals. Nevertheless, no measures have been taken to repair the injury or to put a stop to it. Around all the cities I visited during a stay of twenty years in Mexico, I saw the plains extend and the trees disappear. In the valleys of the Cordilleras, as well as in the Warm Lands, the modern Aztec often sets fire to the forests that surround the desert, to enlarge his farms. Thousands of acres of valuable wood are thus destroyed, and the ground which they covered is suddenly transformed into a savanna, without use, without regard for the future, and without profit.

The plants cultivated by the ancient Mexicans were maize, cotton, cocoa, agave, sage, and allspice. The agave, or "metl," supplied, in a manner, all the needs of the poor. It formed impenetrable barriers around their dwellings, its trunk served for timber in the construction of roofs of cabins, and its leaves took the place of tiles. With these same leaves, which ended in a sharp thorn, they made paper, thread, needles, clothes, and shoes; the juice of the plant, besides the alcoholic beverages celebrated under the names of "pulque" and "mescal," furnished honey, sugar, and vinegar. Lastly, the trunk and the lower part of the agave, cooked in a closed vessel, made a delicate dish. This plant, endowed with diuretic properties, served as a remedy against many diseases.

Apropos of this plant, which was extremely important to the Aztecs, let us hear what Motolinia ("the poor"), who arrived in Mexico three years after the taking of the capital by Hernando Cortez, has to say: —

"The metl is a shrub or thistle which, in the language of the islands, bears the name of "maguey." So many things are made from it and obtained from it that it may be affirmed that iron itself is not more useful. It is a plant which has the appearance of the aloe, but is much larger. Its leaves are green, and they measure four and a half feet in length. They have the shape of a brick, are thick in the middle and thinner towards the ends. They are about a span in circumfer-

ence, are grooved, and taper towards the extremities so that they terminate in a sharp point like a bodkin. Each foot of the plant has thirty or forty of these leaves. When the metl is fully developed, five or six central leaves are cut off, so as to form a cavity, and during three months the liquid which flows from it is collected, — a liquid much like water mixed with honey. When boiled, this juice is transformed into a sweetish, transparent wine.

"This wine, concentrated, gives a very agreeable honey, and a sugar inferior to that of the sugar-cane. Vinegar is also made from it. Sewing-thread is obtained from the leaves of the maguey, and twine, cord, straps, halters, and all the things which we obtain from hemp is made from them. The Indians also make clothes and shoes from it. The thorns of the leaves took the place of nails, and the same leaves were used by the women to mould dough of maize. The workers in feathers also used these leaves to spread over cotton which they transformed into paper, on which they sketched their designs. Painters had recourse to this leaf for many purposes, and masons used them for trowels, tiles, and water-conduits."

Although, for want of horned cattle, the Aztecs were not herdsmen, they had domesticated a large number of beasts. At first, the techichi took the place of the dog, and its flesh was a favorite article of food for the Spaniards. Besides, the Indians

raised turkeys, quails, and ducks, and the nobles owned parks for deer, warrens for rabbits, and ponds for fishes and axolotls.

A small animal, worthy of special mention among those which occupied the attention of the Mexicans, is the "nochiztli" or cochineal. This insect, so much sought for in Europe on account of the beautiful red color which it furnishes, is so delicate, and has to defend itself against so many enemies, that it requires even more care than the silkworm. It fears the cold, the wind, the rain, birds, mice, and worms, so that it is necessary to constantly watch the *cactus coccinilifer*, on which it is raised, and to shelter the leaves in cabins on the approach of the bad season. The females, a little before laying, change their skin, and the Indians help them to do this by brushing them very lightly with a rabbit's tail. On each leaf of the cactus they generally place three nests of fifteen cochineal insects, which give three crops a year. The last of these crops is the least esteemed, for the insects are small and are soiled with the *débris* of the plant which fed them. The cochineal bugs are generally killed by plunging them into boiling water, but their quality especially depends on the care with which they are dried. The best method of desiccation is that of exposure to the sun; nevertheless, some growers use fire, spreading the insects on plates of terra-cotta called "comalli," and which are used in cooking corn-cakes. The insects are also dried in

"temascallis," a sort of oven to which we shall again refer.

If the Aztecs had not been very skilful in hunting, they would not have been able to collect the numerous animals which filled the royal gardens, and also their dwellings. In the chase they used bows, darts, nets, traps, and blow-guns. The blow-guns which the kings and nobles used were curiously wrought and painted, or ornamented with gold or silver.

Besides the hunts undertaken by individuals, either for amusement or to procure food, great battues were made, ordered by the king or established by custom, to supply the temples with victims. For these battues they chose a large wood, generally that of Zacatepec, a little distance from the capital, and placed traps and nets in the middle of it. Thousands of hunters then formed a circle, of a circumference calculated upon the approximate number of pieces of game they desired to take. Fires were lighted from place to place, and the trappers advanced beating drums, blowing conch-shells, hissing, and uttering cries. The terrified animals fled towards the centre of the wood, where the hunters, contracting their circle and continuing their cries, killed them with arrows. The numbers of animals captured in these battues was so large that the first viceroy of Mexico, having heard of it, and not being able to believe it, wished to take part in one. The large plain between the

villages of Xilotepec and Saint-Juan del Rio was chosen for a hunting-ground, and the Indians were told to follow their usual methods. Eleven thousand Otomites formed a circle more than twelve miles in circumference, and after having executed the manœuvre we have just explained, captured six hundred deer and wild goats, a hundred foxes, and an incalculable number of hares and rabbits. This place at the present time still bears the name of "Cazadero."

The method of the Aztecs to catch ducks was rather curious, and it has not been abandoned. These web-footed and other aquatic birds abound on all the lakes of Mexico, and the people who live on the shores float large gourds on the waters, which the birds grow accustomed to seeing, and which they even carry off. When the time for hunting comes an Indian goes into the water, his head covered with one of the gourds; instead of fleeing the ducks approach, and the hunter has no difficulty in seizing them by the feet and drowning them.

The Aztecs boldly captured snakes and serpents; they seized them by the neck or squeezed their jaws between two fingers. But their most marvellous ability consisted in the sureness with which they followed the trail of a wild beast, simply by an examination of the plants upon which it had trampled.

In consequence of the situation of their capital in the middle of the waters and the proximity of

Lake Chalco, in which fish abounded, the Aztecs were, perhaps, still more given to fishing than to hunting. They engaged in it from the moment of their arrival in the valley, for it furnished them with the food they needed. The implements they used were lines, hooks, and weirs. Their canoes, formed of the trunk of a tree hollowed out, which could contain as many as five persons, numbered thousands. In their military expeditions they used boats, into which as many as sixty soldiers could be crowded, and which were propelled by means of oars.

They took alligators by surrounding the neck with a cord, or in a way which, it is said, the Egyptians practise to capture crocodiles on the Nile. The hunter walked boldly up to the reptile, carrying in his hand a short stick, the ends of which were sharpened into a point. When the animal opened his mouth, the stick was placed between his jaws, and in closing on it he pierced them through and through. They then allowed the reptile to become exhausted by loss of blood, whereupon he was despatched. The pearl-divers on the coast of California employed, it appears, the same stratagem to overcome sharks.

Fishing, hunting, and the arts which they cultivated caused many branches of commerce to spring up among the Aztecs. From the date of their settlement on Lake Tezcoco, they engaged in traffic, selling the fish they caught and the rush-mats which they wove to their neighbors. In

exchange, they obtained maize, cotton, stone, lime, and wood, which they lacked. In proportion as they increased their territory by force of arms, they enlarged their commerce, which soon extended as far as the most distant provinces of their empire.

Very enterprising and very bold, the Aztec merchants played an important part in their country, and their powerful corporations paved the way for almost all their conquests. In their foreign enterprises they were morally and materially sustained by their sovereigns, who spared them neither privileges nor pecuniary rewards, neither honors, nor, at time of need, their substantial aid. These traffickers, real colonizers, always travelled in large numbers. They established themselves in distant countries, and there, by reason of their wealth, their shrewdness, and their cunning, they gradually became masters of all business. At last, under pretexts which they excelled in creating, these emigrants declared that their interests had been wronged, or that they were in danger, and an army of their fellow-countrymen hastened to protect them. These emigrants became its scouts, guided, directed, and informed it in regard to the forces of the enemy, and a new province was soon added to those of the empire. This ingenious method of conquest was that of the Carthaginians, and that which gave the English the tutelage of half the world, and has it not in our days — there is nothing new under the sun — built up the modern German empire?

In all the centres of Aztec population there were permanent markets, and every five days a general market was held. An agreement was established between the cities to choose different dates, in order to cause no dissatisfaction. The great markets of Mexico were celebrated; they were held once a week.

Up to the reign of Axayacatl, sixth king of Mexico, the market was held in the square before the palace of the king. But after the conquest of Tlatelolco, it was transported to that suburb, to a square which, according to Cortez, was twice as large as that of Salamanca. Rectangular in form, this plaza was surrounded with porticos, which protected the market people. There all kinds of merchandise were exposed for sale, at a point designated by the "judges of commerce." Jewelry, cotton cloths, feather mosaics, etc., could be sold only at the place set aside for them. Since, in spite of its dimensions, the place could not contain all merchandise brought there, and which would have impeded circulation, stone, timbers, lime, in a word, all cumbrous materials were left on the canal or in the neighboring streets.

The number of venders who daily thronged the market was, according to Cortez, more than fifty thousand; however, according to the anonymous Conqueror, it was only on every fifth day of the week that there was such a concourse, and twenty or twenty-five thousand merchants supplied the

ordinary markets. The quantity and the variety of the goods sold or bartered in Mexico was so considerable that historians, after endless enumerations, declare their inability to name them all. Not only the productions of the empire, but also those of the neighboring States, were for sale in these markets, — objects to supply the necessities of life, or intended to please the taste, the curiosity, or the vanity of the buyers. These markets had numbers of animals, living and dead, all the articles of food in use, all metals worked, every species of precious stone. Plants, gums, resins, mineral earths, ointments, oils, and plasters used by Aztec physicians, had their place, as well as fabrics of agave, of cotton, of palms, of feathers, and skins of animals. Slaves were sold there, as well as boats full of human excrement, used in dressing the skins of animals; in a word, everything which could be exchanged or bought found its place here, for in the interior of the city there existed no other shops except those in which provisions could be purchased. It was to the great market of Mexico that the jewellers of Cholula, the silversmiths of Azcapotzalco, the painters of Tezcoco, the shoemakers of Tenayucan, the hunters of Xilotepec, the fishers of Cuitlahuac, the gardeners of the Warm Lands, and the horticulturists of Xochimilco brought their celebrated products.

The transactions were not simple barters such as the Indians frequently make at the present

time; they bought and sold. Four kinds of money were current in the empire, but none of it was coined. The first consisted of grains of cacao, — different from those used in the preparation of chocolate, — which passed from hand to hand, just as small change does among us. This cacao was reckoned by measures of eight thousand grains, and for merchandise of a high price by sacks of twenty-four thousand. Thirty-five years ago cacao was still current money in Mexico and Tehuantepec, and I have seen cakes of soap, eggs, and even candles fill the same office in several cities of the province of Vera Cruz.

The second species of money consisted of small squares of cotton cloth; it was used in small household purchases. The third was composed of small nuggets of gold enclosed in duck-quills, the transparency of which allowed the precious metal to be seen and its value to be estimated. The fourth, mentioned by Cortez, who has neglected to describe it, was made of tin, and was much like our pieces of money. The pieces of copper having the form of the letter T, of which many specimens are preserved in the museum of Mexico, have until recently been considered Aztec coins. According to Orozco and M. J. Sanchez, these pieces of copper were agricultural implements.

Merchandise was sold by the piece or by measure. Although scales were known to many of the peoples of America, the Aztecs did not make

use of them. They had a contempt for them, it seems, on account of the ease with which the weights could be altered.

To prevent fraud and disorder, commissioners went about these markets, noticing everything that took place. A court, consisting of two judges, constantly sat in a neighboring house, settled differences and punished crimes on the instant.

Each commodity paid a tax to the king, who, in exchange, guaranteed to the merchants impartial justice and safety to their possessions and persons. Thefts in the markets were rare, as much on account of the vigilance of the commissioners as on account of the fear inspired by the prompt and terrible punishment that followed the least offence. Motolinia relates as an eye-witness that two women having engaged in a quarrel in the market of Tezcoco, one of them struck the other until blood flowed. The guilty one, amid the plaudits of the crowd, not accustomed to these acts of violence, was condemned to death. All the Spaniards who have spoken of the Aztec markets are boundless in praise of their good arrangement and the order that reigned among the traffickers, as well as in the disposition of their wares. Let us add that this good order continues to a certain extent to the present day. The modern Mexican markets are still supplied with provisions of every sort, — with the products of manufactures as well as those of nature. They are fairs where objects of the greatest disparity

are sold, — flowers, fruits, vegetables, game, lime, wood, vessels, cloths, charcoal, jewels, and birds.

When a merchant was preparing to undertake a journey he invited to dinner the most prominent men of his trade, those rendered inactive by age, and explained to them the reasons that impelled him to visit other countries. The guests praised his resolution, urged him to follow the steps of his ancestors, and, especially if it was his first journey, gave him advice drawn from their own experience.

Merchants almost always journeyed in caravans in order to have greater security. In their hand they generally carried a smooth black stick, which represented their protecting god, Xacateuctli. Thus armed, they believed themselves safe from all danger, and when they arrived at a hostelry they put all their sticks together and worshipped them; often in the night they bled themselves in honor of their god.

During the absence of a merchant, his wife and children might bathe, but they were allowed to wash the head only every eightieth day, — as much as a sign of sorrow as to merit by this penance the protection of the gods. If the merchant died during his journey, the news was transmitted to the oldest merchants of his city, who communicated it to the kinsmen of the deceased. These immediately made a pine statue representing the dead man, and at the hour of the obsequies they treated the manikin as if it was really his body.

For the convenience of travellers there were roads all over the empire, which were repaired every year after the rainy season. In forests and desert places public shelters were built, and the rivers were provided with bridges or boats to enable people to cross. The boats were square, of various dimensions, and were moved with oars. The smallest, hollowed out of the trunk of a tree, held two persons; the largest carried as many as twenty.

In addition to the boats, the Aztecs used special rafts, called "balsas" by the Spaniards, to cross rivers. These rafts, five feet long, the use of which the modern Indians have not lost, are composed of platforms of bamboo placed upon large empty gourds. Five or six people take their places on these craft, which swimmers draw to the desired shore.

Bridges were generally made of wood, rarely of stone. The commonest were those perilous and picturesque bridges of clinging vines, which even to-day serve to cross the torrents or ravines of the Cordilleras, and for which Nature furnishes the materials. Europeans at times hesitate to venture upon these green foot-bridges thrown over profound abysses, and which are rocked by the breeze like hammocks; but the Indian, even laden with a burden, steps upon these flowered stems, thinking little more of the danger than do the live calandras, who are not afraid to suspend their nests to them.

We know nothing concerning the maritime commerce of the ancient Aztec empire, which, however, must have been very limited. The boats, in fact, ventured but a short distance from the shores which border the two oceans, and served only for fishing. The only traffic by water took place on Lake Tezcoco, which swarmed with canoes. Maize, timbers, stones, vegetables, flowers, and even the drinking-water which the population needed, was brought to Mexico by boats.

Merchandise which was not transported by water had to be brought on the backs of men, in consequence of the lack of beasts of burden; hence porters, called "tlamenes" were numerous in Mexico. Their ordinary load was sixty pounds, and they traversed about twelve miles a day. They undertook long journeys in the train of merchants, opened for themselves passages through the forests, climbing abrupt mountains, and crossing rivers by swimming.

At the present time, although horses, asses, and mules abound in Mexico, the Indians still accomplish long journeys, a load on their backs, over peaks of the Cordilleras where only paths exist; they even carry, at need, timid travellers, women, and children.

My mind filled with the pompous descriptions of the conquering Spaniards, I chanced, on leaving the shady woods of Chapultepec, to stop to contemplate at leisure the beautiful valley, in the middle of which rose the curious Venice of the

New World. The lakes which rendered it celebrated are now half dried up, saline efflorescences cover the sterile sand of their ancient beds, and have robbed it of part of its beauty. But the Cordilleras, several leagues distant, still surround it like a cloudy girdle, to which morning and evening the sun lends an embroidery of gold. Toward the east the three great unchanging volcanoes of the Temperate Lands raise their snowy peaks, shining as if on fire; vultures, the old and faithful guests of this privileged region, circle in a pale-blue sky incomparable in its serenity.

Turned towards the west, seeing some Aztecs moving around me clothed in a costume very much like that which they wore in the time of their emperors, and still speaking the imaged language, so sweet in the mouths of the Nahuas, in imagination I carried myself back into the past, so near us but nevertheless so mysterious. Assailed by my historic memories, I gradually ceased to see the steeples and domes of the modern city, and I called up the Mexico of ancient times, the Tenochtitlan of Moteuczoma, with its temples, its palaces, its towers, its terraces, its canals, its boats, its floating islands, its vegetation, and its peculiar people.

The immense pyramid, with five superposed steps, which so strongly excited the admiration of the conquerors, then suddenly raised its abruptly truncated form on an azure base before my eyes. On the vast platform, so often covered with blood,

the chapels of Tlaloc and of Huitzilipochtli arose, as formerly, their storied towers surmounted by cupolas. Toward the north, the great causeway of Lake Chalco seemed an immense bridge. Lower down, the enclosing wall of the temple, with its bas-reliefs representing enormous intertwined serpents, reflected in the clear wave its white brilliant line, which the sun's rays made as bright, Cortez says, as silver.

Around the vast edifice — the most important of the architectural works undertaken by the Aztecs, and at the foot of which two braziers always burned — I counted, one by one, the forty lesser temples enumerated by the historians. To the left, the circular teocalli of Quetzacoatl, with its fantastic gate representing the open jaws of a serpent. A little farther, the place devoted to religious dances, the colleges or seminaries, the sacrificial stones; and then in the rear, the special temples of Tlaloc and Tezcatlipoca.

Next came the temple of the planet Venus, with its high column bearing the image of the star, reproduced a hundred times by its neighbor, the "house of mirrors." More distant, the "house of shells," its roof covered with shells of mollusks, the variegated colors of which shone in the sun, shaded the platform on which rested the stone for the gladiators. The Epcoatl, raised in honor of the Tlalocs, was side by side with the Macuilcalli, where spies were punished with death. Between the Teotlalpan, raised in honor of

Mixcohuatl, and the sanctuary of Istacinteutl, the white god to whom lepers were immolated, rose the Tlalxico, dedicated to the master of the infernal regions, the sombre Mictlanteuctli. Lastly, outside of the sacred enclosure the two great ossuaries, the sight of which terrified the Spaniards, showed their massive oblong forms, and displayed, the one its prodigious pile of human bones, the other the garland of skulls with which it was crowned.

The palace of the Emperor, with its pink walls, its porticos, its columns of agate and porphyry, its twenty doors, its sculptured friezes, its courts, its fountains and its gardens,— itself eclipsed, nevertheless, by the cyclopean proportions of the great temple, — eclipsed, in turn, by its dimensions, the aristocratic dwellings by which it was surrounded, palaces surmounted by terraces with embattled parapets. In the distance, a thousand temples or chapels, with many-colored stones, natural or painted, like immense mosaics. Three hundred and sixty towers rose proudly toward the heavens and looked down upon the city. Here and there sombre masses of foliage of cedars and cypresses — trees always dear to the Aztecs — attracted my eyes, and made still more striking the whiteness of the sixty thousand houses occupied by the people, who in the suburbs merely sheltered themselves under thatched roofs artistically arranged. In my imagination I seemed to hear in the noise of the modern city the cries of the victim whose

heart was being torn out, and in the reddish mist which generally floats above the hill of Peñon I thought I saw vapors reeking with blood.

Outside of the city, as if to protect it, and simply placed on the ground, was a number of granite monsters in fantastic postures, grinning images of fierce gods. Here was Tlaloc, with his projecting teeth, intended to mangle the breast of children ; there Huitzilipochtli, with his standard, his serpents, his funereal insignia. On the sides of the causeways were seats consecrated to Tezcatlipoca, altars decked with garlands of verdure by his devotees.

The sumptuous Tenochtitlan was built in the shade of Peñon, in the midst of a flora of incomparable richness, on a soil which, owing to the abundance of the waters by which it was surrounded, was then still more fertile than it is to-day. In this beautiful climate, in the centre of a lake with calm, blue waters, in a valley which seems a garden of flowers, which is cheered by the harmonious songs of splendidly-plumed birds, under a sky which is troubled only by storms of short duration, why were there everywhere terrible divinities, images of death, which it was necessary to ceaselessly glut with blood? Was it not to their gentle climate that the Greeks owed their cheerful imagination?

The shades of evening invading the valley effaced my dreams of the past, very incomplete, alas! Retracing my steps, and entering the

modern city, after having caught a glimpse of that of other days, I was assailed by a doubt. I asked myself, as a celebrated Mexican writer, Lucas Alaman, had done unknown to me, if the ancient city of Tenochtitlan had ever really been as magnificent as it has been described to us, and as I had reconstructed it in thought. To what miracle is it owing that not a fragment of the walls of the splendid palaces which it contained is left standing? How have its three hundred towers, its marble columns, its columns of jasper and porphyry described in such pompous words, fallen without leaving a trace after them? Rome, sacked by barbarians, still shows its walls half crumbled away, and its mutilated statues. Without seeking so far for examples, the Zapotec sees the superb tombs of Mictlan rise above the tangled brush-wood, Cholula shows us its pyramid, Palenque its bas-reliefs, Chichen-Itza its marvellous architecture. In Mexico, younger by ten centuries, there are scarcely any traces of the past; the modern city is not even built, as one might suppose, with the ruins of its ancestor. Up to the present time the excavations — insufficient and badly directed, it is true — have yielded but a small number of statues or bas-reliefs. The Spaniards have razed all the buildings and pulverized all the images. But to what wind have they cast this dust, so that no field is whitened with it? This is certainly a problem. On the one side are unanimous affirmations, on the other the

absence of sufficient material proofs to demonstrate to us that the witnesses have observed clearly. Indeed, Tenochtitlan was a great city, the causeways which connected it with the land are grand works still admired; but, is it not strange that two thousand temples, a hundred palaces, a thousand sumptuous dwellings, should have disappeared to give room to a new city, leaving but little more trace of them than a mirage or the last year's snow?

We do not exaggerate. If no vestige of the grand buildings of the past is now seen in Mexico, from time to time we discover, generally near the cathedral, when the soil is disturbed in public works, walls, statues, bas-reliefs, treasures concealed, in all probability, by bishop Zumarraga and his missionaries. There lies, perhaps, part of the city for which I have sought in vain. It is to be hoped that the capital of Mexico, so devoted to the arts, may some day carry out the labors necessary to exhume the monuments of its history, buried a few feet under the ground, and which it has trod upon for too long a time with an indifference unworthy of its high civilization.

CHAPTER XV.

TRADES. — STONE-CUTTERS. — JEWELLERS. — POTTERS. — WEAVERS. — PHYSICIANS. — BATHS. — BLEEDING. — FOOD. — COSTUMES. — FURNITURE.

FOR want of iron or steel utensils, the first Aztec artisans, in working stone, were obliged to have recourse to substances of which experience had taught them the force of resistance. At first, like all other people, they used flint, which they gradually replaced by obsidian, which very soon took the place of all other material. With this substance of volcanic origin they made knives, arrow-points, razors, scrapers, polishers, and even mirrors, which they framed in gold or silver.

Obsidian, a mineral with a feldspar base, of which Mexico has many beds, — the most celebrated is the *cerro de las navajas*, — is found under various forms. Sometimes it has the color of gold or of silver, at others it is black, blue, green, red, and even white. The Aztec stone-cutters used it in many ways. In the manufacture of knives, scrapers, razors or lancets, Torquemada, who saw them at work, says they were of a wonderful dexterity. They took a block of obsidian as large as a leg, then a stick the size of a lance-

shaft, to which they attached a small piece of the stone. Then seating themselves on the ground, the block of obsidian held between the feet as in a vice, they grasped the stick by its ends, placed it in contact with the top of the stone, and drew it towards them with all their strength. A pointed chip, sharpened on its two edges, suddenly detached itself. A workman thus made a score of knives in an instant. Thus it was by pressure that the Mexicans obtained cutting-utensils from a nucleus of obsidian.

But blades intended for swords, small figures, images of flowers, fruits, or of animals, as well as masks for the face of idols in certain solemnities, seem to have been made by chipping. These thousands of objects cut in this rebellious material by the ancient peoples of Anahuac, who, in addition worked granite, marble, and rock-crystal, are not the smallest wonders of our museums. On this subject a simple walk through the ethnologic galleries of Trocadero, so rich, and so scientifically arranged by Dr. Hamy, would teach the curious in a few minutes more than they could learn from the most minute descriptions.

The Aztec jewellers were very skilful; they not only knew the value of precious stones, but could cut and polish them. In the latter operation they used a fine sand; their methods of cutting are unknown to us. The stones they worked by way of preference were emeralds, amethysts, cornelians, turquoises, and lastly, iron-pyrites.

Real emeralds were used only in the ornaments for gods and sovereigns; as to the false ones — fluorides of lime, tinted green — they were so abundant that all the nobles possessed a great number of them, and we know that after their death one was suspended from their lower lip, to serve them for a heart in the other world.

A considerable quantity of these stones was sent to Europe during the years following the conquest, and when Cortez first returned to Spain he brought back many, five of which became celebrated. According to Gomara, who saw them, one of these stones had the form of a rose, another that of a horn, a third represented a fish, the eyes of which were of gold, and the fourth a hand-bell, for which a pearl served as a clapper. Lastly, the most valuable, for which certain Genoese merchants offered as many as 40,000 ducats, was cut in the form of a cup and ornamented with four fine golden chains connected with a pearl. These emeralds, carved by order of Cortez by the jewellers of Mexico, became the property of his second wife, Donna Juana Ramirez de Arellano y Zuniga. At the present time the Indians are not only no longer able to cut precious stones, but they are ignorant of the location of the beds formerly so productive.

Copper-pyrites, of metallic brilliancy, was often used for the manufacture of mirrors. Rock-crystal was utilized for the tentetl ("mouth stone"), with which the nobles decorated their lips, and

to represent fantastic objects. Agates, marbles, and jades, served the Aztec jewellers for common materials.

The ancient Aztecs, like their descendants, made all their household utensils of clay; and the potters of Anahuac were very skilful. Besides the objects intended for domestic use, they modelled images of the gods, puppets, animals, whistles, and flageolets. Among their tripod vases — a characteristic form in America, and especially in Mexico — some are found completely European in appearance. These vases were curious on account of their workmanship, as well as on account of the paintings with which they were decorated. The most celebrated pottery came from Cholula, which had preserved the traditions of Toltec ceramics; none of it was glazed, but it was colored and polished with care.

Weavers were numerous in the empire of Moteuczoma; they supplied the place of wool with cotton, that of silk with feathers and rabbit-skins, hemp and flax with the fibre of several kinds of palms. In spinning they used spindles of terra-cotta. With cotton thread they wove cloth as fine as the linen of Holland, cloth which they dyed and ornamented with designs in various colors. With feathers and cotton they manufactured a fabric as soft to the touch as it was agreeable to the eye, which was used for mantles and blankets. From two species of agave they obtained, by maceration, thread of great strength.

We know but very little concerning the other trades practised by the Aztecs. Their tanners, by a process unknown to us, dressed the skins of quadrupeds and birds without damage to the hair or to the feathers. With rushes and palm-leaves dyed in various colors, their basket-makers wove baskets and mats of great fineness, which they ornamented with various designs. This art is still in vogue among the Mistecs, whose works in esparto are really artistic curiosities.

The Aztec cabinet-makers and carpenters, whose skill was recognized by the Spaniards, used implements of stone and bronze, some of which have been preserved. As we have already remarked, the museums are filled with burnishers, polishers, mortars, pots, stones, and implements for grinding, — instruments of every nature, the use of which, unfortunately, archæologists have frequently great difficulty in determining, in spite of the aid afforded by the ideographic pictures.

The Aztecs surprised the Spaniards by their industrial skill. Country and city labors were equally well understood by the Aztecs, and none of them was obliged to have recourse to his neighbors when he wished to build a cabin, or to obtain the different materials necessary for this task. All knew how to cut stone, shape wood, plait rope, and weave reed-mats. At a very early age, children learned the name and use of the animals, of the trees, and of the plants about them. These remarks, made by Motolinia soon

after the conquest, are still applicable to the modern Aztecs.

The art of medicine in Anahuac seems to have attracted the attention of Spanish authors but little. In their writings they confine themselves to the statement that the Aztec physicians were very familiar with the properties of plants, and that with their aid they effected marvellous cures. It is worthy of remark that the Mexican painters themselves make no mention of the healing art; whence it must be inferred that the Aztec physicians contented themselves with communicating the results of their experience to their sons, without formulating them into axioms. However, they were not simple empirics, for they recognized the different phases of diseases. Hernandez, sent to Mexico by Philip II., tells us so several times in his great work on natural history. This *savant* had, as guides in his studies, Aztec physicians, who made known to him the names and properties of twelve hundred plants.

Our materia medica owes tobacco, gum-copal, liquid amber, sarsaparilla, resin of tecamaca, jalap, and huaca, to the Aztecs. But the enumeration of the medicinal plants they used, which their descendants still employ, and among which are found purgatives, emetics, blood-purifiers, sudorifics, and vermifuges, would take us too far from our subject. Let us add that these physicians prepared infusions, decoctions, plasters, ointments, and oils, and

that the commonest of these medicaments were sold and still are sold in the markets.

Bleeding was in use among the Aztec physicians, who practised it very skilfully with the aid of lancets made of obsidian. The common people bled themselves, either with agave-thorns or with porcupine-quills.

The conquering Spaniards have spoken highly of the rapidity with which the Aztec physicians healed wounds and sores; and Cortez, severely wounded in the head at the battle of Otomba, was cured by the Tlaxcaltecs. Is this a question of environment? Be this as it may, there is a tradition in Mexico that wounds in the head, always dangerous on high plateaus, heal promptly in the Warm Lands, where, on the other hand, wounds on the legs fester very easily. Let us remark that in every case the manner of dressing wounds followed by the Aztecs is held in esteem at the present time; for their first care was to remove the injured part from the influences of the air, by covering it with aromatic resins.

The Aztec physicians, it is needless to remark, applied their medicaments with a thousand superstitious ceremonies, — invocations to the gods, and imprecations against the disease with which they were compelled to struggle. The modern Indian bone-setters remember these practices, as well as those which consist in removing bones, stones, reptiles, insects, or hairs from the afflicted part of the body.

The bath played an important rôle in the hygiene of the Mexicans; but there was one which Torquemada contents himself with merely mentioning, and which would probably be unknown to us, if its usage had not been perpetuated up to our own day. I refer to the "temascalli."

The temascalli is generally constructed of bricks, and its form is very similar to that of the ovens of our bakers, with the difference that the bottom is concave instead of flat. Its diameter is generally eight feet, its height six, and its entrance is scarcely large enough for a man to pass through it on his knees. Opposite this entrance is a furnace with a hole in its upper part intended to allow the smoke to escape. The stone which separates the grate from the oven is of a porous nature.

The bather, provided with a jar of water and a whip made of aromatic plants, enters the oven, the adjoining part of which has been previously superheated, stretches himself on a mat, and throws the water on to the porous stone. A thick vapor is immediately produced; the bather then whips his body with the aromatic herbs, and a copious sweat soon covers his members. This, it will be seen, is the famous vapor-bath which we have borrowed from the Russians, who have possibly themselves borrowed it from the Aztecs.

The bath of temascalli is regarded as efficacious against rheumatism, fever, and the bite of venomous animals. It is in such common use,

especially for women after their deliverance, that there are but few villages in Mexico which do not possess at least one of them.

During the long years of wretchedness passed in the islands of their lake, hunger compelled the Aztecs to support themselves on what they found in the waters. They accustomed themselves, at that time, to eat not only the roots of aquatic plants, snakes, and axolotls, — those strange batrachians, — but also ants, flies, and their eggs.

The axayacatl — this is the name they gave to the fly which they used as food — was so abundant that they could not only live on it themselves, but use it as food for the birds they raised. They made a dough of these flies, which they seasoned with saltpetre, and which they cooked in leaves of maize. This strange dish, according to the Spaniards, who tasted it, was not disagreeable to the palate. A sort of caviare, to which birds were very partial, was made with the eggs which the axayacatl deposited in great numbers on the reeds of the lake. The Aztecs also ate, and still eat, a foul substance which floats on the waters of the lake. Having dried it in the sun, they kept it to use in the form of cheese, the taste of which it recalls.

Accustomed to this wretched food, they did not renounce it entirely when prosperity came; hence their markets were supplied with flies, ants, grasshoppers, larvæ from palm-trees or from the agave, raw, fried, or roasted, which the poor usually

bought. Nevertheless, in their banquets the dishes were many and varied.

Maize, which they called "tlaolli" and "centli," took the place with them of the wheat of Europe, the rice of Asia, and the millet of Africa, — with the advantage that its yield is larger than that of the other cereals, that it accommodates itself to all climates, and that it requires less care. The Aztecs had several varieties of maize, distinct in size, color, and quality. They made a sort of bread from it, or rather a species of cake which took the place of bread, and which their descendants still eat. To prepare these cakes, the grains of maize are boiled in water to which lime is added. When the grains are swollen and softened, they are pressed in the hands to remove the skin, and the mass thus obtained is crushed on a stone called "metatl," with the aid of a roller also made of stone. With this paste, they make — by flattening it between the hands — "tortillas," or cakes having the appearance and size of our pan-cakes; they are cooked on a round piece of clay called "comalli," placed over a wood-fire. The women made this bread then, and do so now. Maize was not eaten only in the form of small cakes. Crushed and cooked in water, it made a sort of porridge called "atolli." This is another of the ancient Aztec dishes which the modern Indians are unwilling to give up.

Next to maize the most highly appreciated natural production, not only among the Mexicans

but among all the peoples of Anahuac, was, beyond contradiction, cacáo, which they used in the manufacture of many beverages, among others the celebrated "chocolatl." This drink was prepared by grinding in alabaster vases equal parts of cacao-beans and seeds of pochotl or sequoïa, which were then boiled. This liquid was shaken up to make it frothy, mixed with dough made of maize, and then submitted to a new cooking to thicken it. By way of preference this beverage was drunk lukewarm. Such was the original manner of preparing chocolate, which, adopted by all the civilized nations of Europe, and modified according to the particular taste of each of them, has become an almost national article of diet in France as well as in Spain. The Mexicans aromatized this drink with certain flowers, which we have replaced with vanilla, and the Spaniards with cinnamon. They sweeten it with honey.

Very frugal, the Aztec ate and still eats very little meat; however, at banquets and even daily on the table of the wealthy were found deer, peccaries, rabbits, enormous moles called "tuzas," techichis, turkeys, partridges, fish, turtles, iguanas, and birds of many species, — grallic, palmiped, gallinaceous, and passerine.

At that time as in our own day, black beans constituted a national dish among the Aztecs. Many fruits, also, adorned their tables, and delighted the eye while they pleased the palate. The commonest were the mamey, achras zapota,

which furnishes the gum called "chiclé," which the creoles are fond of chewing; the chicozapota, *lucuma salicifolium;* the black zapota, *diospiros obresifolia;* the banana, *bromelia ananas;* the chirimoya, *anona cherimolia;* the ahuacatl or vegetable butter, *laurus persea;* the Barbary fig, and twenty others. In this nomenclature we ought not to forget tapioca, sago, the sweet-potato, onions, dahlia tubercles, shoots, leaves, flowers, or roots of a number of vegetables.

In the midst of this abundance of eatables the Aztecs had neither milk nor butter, not even grease; and as to eggs, they ate only those of turkeys, iguanas, and turtles. For seasoning they used salt, pepper, allspice, tomatoes, and certain aromatic plants.

They made use of many vinous beverages, which they manufactured from the stalks or grains of maize. The most celebrated of these liquors, "chicla," was common to all the peoples of America, and was prepared in twenty different ways. But, besides palm-tree wine, obtained with difficulty, and the drinks made by the fermentation of sweet fruits, and known under the generic name of "tepaches," the favorite beverage of the Aztecs was, and still is, pulque, of which we have already spoken.

Was the sugar-cane known to the peoples of Anahuac? Many indications tend to show that it was. The fact that Columbus supplied himself with stalks of this plant at the time of his voyage

to the Canary Isles would not prove that it was not cultivated in the country in which he landed.

The Aztecs ate on mats, seated on little benches made of wood or reeds. They made use of napkins and plates, but they were familiar with neither spoons nor forks; they still disdain the use of them. Several species of gourds supplied them with cups and bottles, which they painted very artistically. Their meals were regular. In the morning, after a few hours of work, they lunched on atolli broth; they dined about mid-day. We know nothing in regard to their supper.

After their dinner the dignitaries smoked and took a siesta. They did not smoke tobacco exclusively, but used other aromatic plants, with which they filled simple reeds. They inhaled the smoke vigorously that it might penetrate the lungs. It is a curious fact that the descendants of the inventors of this singular custom, adopted by every people, should have abandoned it. Few Indians smoke, and none of them use snuff.

The ordinary clothing of the Aztecs was very elementary; that of men consisted of a large girdle called "maxatl," then a piece of cloth four feet long, which enveloped the body, and two corners of which were knotted upon the breast or upon the shoulder. This "timatli" (mantle) is now the famous "sarape," which to-day completes the toilet of the modern Mexicans. The costume of the women was almost as simple, for it was composed of a piece of cloth, "cueitl," which they wrapped

around their bodies, and which descended a little below the knee; over this skirt they wore a sleeveless chemise called "huepilli." These primitive garments are still worn by the Indian men and women; they varied more in color than in shape (see fig. 3).

The cloth used by the ordinary people in the making of their apparel was woven from thread obtained from the agave or the palm-tree, or from a coarse cotton-fibre. Finer cloth was made for the rich, dyed in various colors, often ornamented with flowers or pictures of animals, frequently also interwoven with feathers and ornamented with bits of gold. The nobles generally wore two or three mantles, and their wives the same number of petticoats, all of equal length but of different colors. Besides this, they muffled themselves up in a sort of surplice, such as Catholic priests wear, but with wider sleeves. The footwear of the two sexes consisted simply of sandals made of leather or agave-thread, the straps of which the wealthy ornamented with gold cord or precious stones.

All the Aztecs allowed their hair to grow, for they regarded it as dishonorable to cut it off, except in the case of young girls, who consecrated themselves to the worship of the gods. The women wore their hair flowing or arranged in plaits with which they surrounded the forehead, — a fashion they have not yet abandoned. The men dressed their hair in various ways, and in

war or while engaged in dances they surmounted it with bunches of feathers. Both sexes were fond of painting the face, the breast, the arms, the feet, the hair, using red, yellow, and black cosmetics. According to Sahagun, the noble women colored the teeth red with carmine obtained from cochineal.

If their clothes were of great simplicity, the Aztecs were, on the other hand, very fond of jewels. Besides the feathers, the small golden figures, the precious stones which they suspended from their cloaks, they ornamented their ears and lower lip with them, and loaded their necks, their arms, and their legs, with collars, bracelets and rings. Poor people used mother-of-pearl, crystal, amber, and brilliant stones for their ear-rings; wealthy people, pearls, emeralds, turquoises, and amethysts mounted in gold.

Their furniture was no more in keeping with the taste for luxury which the fondness of the Aztecs for jewels showed they possessed, than was their clothing. Their beds were composed of rush-mats more or less fine, which the wealthy covered with cloth, and the kings with a fabric made of feathers. The pillow of the poor, then as now, consisted of a stone or a piece of wood. The men used their mantles for coverings; we have already seen that the wealthy had them made of fabrics of feathers or cotton.

None of the peoples of Anahuac were acquainted with lamps, bougies, or candles; these

were afterwards brought from Spain, and excited the admiration of the Indians. On the coasts the inhabitants used a phosphorescent insect called cucullo (*pyrophoros angustipennis*) for lighting. However, the most usual light consisted of torches and of pine-branches. Moreover, these people did not stay up after dark; hard workers, the fatigues of the day obliged them, and still oblige them, to seek rest at nightfall.

To obtain fire the Aztecs rubbed two dry branches of the annatto tree together. It is claimed, but without proof, that they were acquainted with the flint and steel. Like the Romans and many other nations, they kept up a perpetual fire in their temples.

They were not acquainted with soap, but they supplied its place with a fruit and a root. The fruit, still used, is that of the copaxocotl, under the envelope of which is found a pulp, which, dissolved in water, renders it frothy. The root is that of the amolli (*saponaria americana*). The fruit of the copaxocotl served in cleaning clothes; the amolli was used for the toilet.

CHAPTER XVI.

LANGUAGE. — POETRY. — ELOQUENCE. — THE THEATRE. — MUSIC. — DANCES. — SPORTS AND AMUSEMENTS.

THE great number of idioms in use in the territory of Anahuac — even at the present time there are about twenty — was not an obstacle to the commerce of the Aztecs. Their language, which the Toltecs had spoken, which the Alcolhuas and all the tribes of Chichimec origin still speak, was also generally learned by the other nations conquered by them.

The consonants of the Aztec alphabet are the same as those of the English, omitting the letters, *b*, *d*, *f*, *g*, *j*, *k*, *r*, *s*, and *w*. The other letters, with the exception of *v*, are pronounced as they are in French. The ambiguous articulation of the Spanish *v* was a cause of trouble for the first writers in the Aztec language, and hence a deplorable anarchy exists in words in which this letter is found. Thus the word "drum" is written "vevetl," "ueuetl," or "huehuetl."

Among the vowels *o* is the only one of which the sound is not well defined; it resembles the sound of the French diphthong *eu*, which has no equivalent in Spanish. Father Carochi, author of a grammar which is the standard, thinks the

word for "God" should be written "Teotl," and not "Teutl;" "ichpotli" (young girl), and not "ichputli." If we have not always respected this rule, it is because we have been obliged to obey custom, — that despot which so often defies reason.

Moreover, it is not an easy task to choose, among the various orthographies adopted by different Spanish writers from the earliest times, the correct one. Thus, to cite but one example, the name of the first Mexican king is written "Acamapich," "Acamapichi," "Acamapitzin," "Acamapixtli," "Acamapitz" "Acamapic," etc. In such cases we have always adopted the most modern form of orthography,— first, because it reproduces the pronunciation of the indigenes of Anahuac with greater exactness; and secondly, because it is supported by etymology.

The Aztec alphabet, compared with those of European nations, is, as we have seen, poor. The consonants most frequently used are: *l*, *t*, *x*, *z*; next, the sounds *tl* and *tz*. Although the consonant *l* is of most frequent occurrence, it is curious to notice that it is never found at the beginning of a word.

The Aztec language, sweet and harmonious to the ear, has no sharp or nasal sounds; the penultimate syllable of almost all its words is long.

In Aztec words the plural is formed by a change in termination. Thus, in substantives terminating in *tl*, this last syllable is replaced by *me*; for instance, "pitzotl," the pig, "pitzome,"

the pigs; "cuicuitzcatl," the swallow, "cuicuitzame," the swallows. This rule is only applicable to words terminating in *tl;* words that end in *hua* use *que*, etc.

Genders do not exist in the Mexican language; thus "mixtli" denotes lioness as well as lion. To distinguish the sexes, the Aztecs use the words "oquichtli," male, and "cihuatl," female, of which they rejected the termination. Thus, "oquimixtli" means the lion, and "cihuamixtli" the lioness.

The Aztec language has neither comparatives nor superlatives, and in their stead it employs particles. On the other hand, it has even more diminutives and augmentatives than Italian; and its substantives and verbs are more numerous than in any other language. Each verb, moreover, by the addition of certain letters produces a multitude of others.

By the union of simple words the Aztecs formed compound vocables; and these new words are frequently a veritable definition of the object they designate. Almost all the names of animals, plants, and cities belong to this category.

The Aztec language is rich, exact, and expressive. A proof of its richness is found in the "Natural History" of Dr. Hernandez, who, having described twelve hundred plants, two hundred birds, many quadrupeds, reptiles, insects, and metals, collected in Mexico, was able to mention each of them by a special name which the Indians gave them. Another proof of its wealth is found

in the fact that the first missionaries had no difficulty in making it express the abstract ideas of the religion in which they wished to instruct those who spoke it.

Among a people in possession of a rich, harmonious, and exact language, orators and poets must have been numerous. The Aztecs cultivated poetry and eloquence, but without recognizing all their advantages. Those who were destined for the art of oratory accustomed themselves from youth to speak with elegance; they learned by heart the harangues pronounced by their ancestors and preserved by tradition.

It was especially in embassies, in councils, or in the expression of congratulations addressed to the king, that the Aztec orators had an opportunity to shine. They of course cannot be compared to those of the Old World; nevertheless they could find good arguments, and could arouse and convince, as we may judge from the fragments of speeches which have come down to us, and by the numerous addresses which Sahagun has preserved.

As an example of this eloquence, of which we have been enabled to judge already in the "counsels of a father to his son, and of a mother to her daughter," we shall translate the speech which the king of the Alcolhuas addressed to Moteuczoma II., the day on which he was elected emperor: —

"The happiness which presides over the destiny of the Mexican nation," said the sovereign, "is

doubly shown in the election of to-day, — by the unanimity of the votes, and by the universal joy with which their results have been received. This joy is proper, for the empire of Anahuac has reached such a degree of grandeur that nothing less, O lord, than the strength of thy invincible heart, and the wisdom which we admire in thee, could sustain it. I clearly see with what love the Supreme God regards this nation, since He has enlightened us in such a manner that we have chosen him who can govern it the best. Who would dare to doubt that the man who so many times has shown the strength of his mind, when he was a private individual, will do still more now that he has need of this knowledge? Who can doubt that, where exists so much courage and wisdom, the support of the widow and of the orphan will be found? The Aztec empire has certainly just reached the zenith of its power, since its king inspires respect in all those who see him. Rejoice, happy nation, in having for master a sovereign who will be the support of thy happiness, in whom all thy children will find a father and a brother, — a sovereign who will not abuse his power, who will not deliver himself up to effeminacy, nor to pleasures, whose heart will always be solicitous for thy welfare, and to whom no meats will appear delicate, so much will he be occupied with thy happiness. As to thee, noble lord, take confidence, and be assured that the Creator of

heaven, who has just raised thee to such a high dignity, will give thee the strength to fulfil the duties which it imposes."

This eulogy, it will be seen, contains excellent advice; and it was certainly not among a people of barbarians that a man thought and expressed himself in this manner.

Besides, the Aztecs, from a very early date, chose their pontiffs, their generals, and their administrators, from among their eloquent men, not taking their origin into consideration; and these dignitaries fulfilled their functions with an ardent zeal. Cruel and implacable toward the enemies of their country, they, on the other hand, were just and humane toward their fellow-countrymen.

Poets, among the Aztecs, were more numerous than orators; their verses were measured and cadenced. The poetry of the Aztecs was brilliant and imaged; it borrowed its comparisons from the flowers, the trees, the brooks, the most pleasing objects of nature. In poetry the Mexicans used compound words by way of preference; these words were often long enough to constitute a verse.

A great variety of subjects were treated of in poetry; most frequently they composed hymns in honor of the gods, which were sung in the temples and during the sacred dances. The poets likewise composed verses in which they recounted the adventures of the nation or the glorious actions of their heroes, — compositions which were

declaimed during the profane *fêtes*. They also cultivated the ode; however, among them it generally ended with a useful lesson. Hunting and fishing usually furnished the topics for their descriptive poems. The infrequency with which love is brought into play in Aztec verse is, as Clavigero remarked, owing to the fact that the poets were almost always priests.

A king of the Alcolhuas, Nezahualcoyotl, was himself a great poet, and his example made versification fashionable at his court. We are told that a poet condemned to death for some crime, wrote some verses in which he bade adieu to the world in such a touching way that the musicians of the court, all of whom were his friends, determined to sing them before the king. The latter, hearing the verses, was so moved by them that he granted the culprit his life, — a fact unique in the history of the Alcolhuas. According to Torquemada, who also relates this legend, the culprit was the son-in-law of Nezahualcoyotl himself, falsely accused of adultery. Led into the presence of his father-in-law, who had recognized his innocence, and believing he was on his way to death, the poet recited his verses; they obtained him congratulations and new honors.

The Aztecs had a taste not only for lyric but also for dramatic poetry. The stage on which they represented their dramas was a simple platform built under the open sky in the marketplaces or on the lower step of the temples. The

stage in Mexico, according to Cortez, was six feet high and thirty feet square.

There is little probability that in their dramatic compositions the Aztecs observed the rules recognized in the Old World. However, we have a general idea of their talent in this art in a description by Father Acosta of a performance given in Cholula on the occasion of the feast of the god Quetzacoatl: —

"Near the lower step of the temple of this god," says the learned Jesuit, "there was a small stage carefully whitewashed, which was ornamented with branches, wreaths of flowers, and feathers, from which were suspended birds, rabbits, and fruits, the whole picturesquely arranged. To this place the people hastened after dinner. The actors suddenly appeared and presented scenes of buffoonery. They pretended to be deaf, lame, blind, and paralyzed, and prayed the idols to cure them. The deaf answered those who spoke to them with cock and bull stories, the lame with acrobatic feats; all these actors, by displaying their afflictions, excited the laughter of the public.

"These buffoons were succeeded by others who represented animals. One was a beetle, another a toad, a third a crocodile, etc. These animals discoursed among themselves, explained the parts they played upon earth, and each of them claimed to be the first. The people loudly applauded these actors, who were very skilful

in representing the ways of the animals they were imitating. Next came the pupils of the seminaries, provided with wings of butterflies or of birds of different colors. These children took refuge in trees arranged for the purpose, and the priests pelted them with pellets of earth with the aid of blow-guns, while addressing comic admonitions to them. A ballet, in which all the actors took part, ended the performance." This is all that is known of the Mexican stage, and it must be admitted that Father Acosta's description recalls the stage of Thespis rather than the art of Æschylus.

The music of the Aztecs was unworthy of so cultivated a people. They were not acquainted with stringed instruments; those they used were confined to the "huehuetle," the "teponastle," trumpets, sea-shells, and flutes — generally made of terra-cotta — which produced shrill sounds. The huehuetle was a wooden cylinder, three feet high, carved and ornamented with paintings, its top covered with skin of a deer, which could be stretched or loosened at will, according as they wished to produce deep or rumbling sounds. This drum was played by striking its head with the fingers, which required a certain amount of skill.

The teponastle, still in use in some towns, is a hollow wooden cylinder, with no openings but two longitudinal parallel slits close together. The strip of wood between the two slits is struck with

two rods, like our drum-sticks, but covered with rubber to make the sound softer. The dimensions of the teponastle varied greatly; some which the musician suspended from his neck were small, while others were five feet long. In using them they were placed on a pedestal, which very often represented a man in a bent position, a tiger, or a monkey. The noise produced by this instrument, which I have frequently heard, has something melancholy in its tones; and it is audible at a great distance.

Must we count among the musical instruments of the Aztecs the bones of deer, and even of men, which were put into the hands of the distinguished dead on the day of their funeral? These bones, notched their whole length, were rubbed against each other or against a shell. The sound they produced can be imagined; it certainly lacked harmony. We must also mention the "axacaxtli," — a sort of gourd pierced with holes, which was filled with small stones. These enormous rattles, shaken in time with the other instruments, took the place of castanets.

Drums, flutes, even conch shells accompanied the hymns sung in the temples, which were chanted in a sing-song manner, in a rude, monotonous tune, fatiguing to European ears. But the Aztecs took so much pleasure in them that they frequently sang during entire days. In spite of this taste music is the only art that remained in infancy among them.

Bad musicians, the Mexicans, on the other hand, were very skilful in the art of dancing, in which they exercised themselves under the direction of priests from childhood. Their dances, which were of great variety, had different names. They danced in circles, or arranged in files, between which a dancer executed fancy steps. The women often took part in this amusement. For this recreation the nobles put on their most costly clothes, and decked themselves with jewels of gold, of silver, or of feathers. They bore a light shield in one hand, in the other they carried one of the gourds filled with stones of which we have spoken above. While going through their steps they shook this rattle to keep time with the airs played by the musicians. When the plebeians danced they muffled themselves in disguises, of papyrus, of skins, or of feathers, representing animals.

In the ordinary dances — those intended to amuse the nobles in their palaces, those which took place in the temples as acts of devotion, or those executed in houses on the occasion of a domestic *fête* — there was but a small number of partners. These then formed two parallel lines, and danced side by side or face to face. Sometimes the two lines crossed, or one of the best dancers placed himself between them and danced alone.

In the great commemorative ballets, which were performed either in the market-places or on the lower step of the temple, several hundred people

took part. The musicians stood in the centre, and the nobles, placing themselves near them, formed several concentric circles, which began to move round and round. Every dancer, while executing his steps had to keep his own circle. The outer circle, having more space to move about in than the others, was more animated. A little way from those of the nobles the plebeians formed their circles, and still others were composed of the young people.

The dances were almost always accompanied by songs; these were at first slow, but when the musicians and the dancers became animated, the song became quicker to keep time with the measure. Generally one of the dancers intoned a verse, and the rest took it up. Between the lines of the circles buffoons tasked their wits to amuse the crowd with grotesque steps. When one circle was tired out another was immediately formed to replace it.

Such was the arrangement observed in the ordinary ballets; but in other dances there was a semblance of dramatic art, for they represented an episode in the life of the gods, an heroic action, scenes of war or of the chase.

Not only did the priests, the nobles, and the pupils of both sexes of the seminaries take part in the dance, but the king himself indulged in this amusement during religious ceremonies, or as a recreation. However, he always danced alone, out of respect for his dignity.

Historians have described for us a singular dance, which was held in great favor in Yucatan. A pole was erected fifteen or twenty feet high, to the top of which were attached a number of very long cords of various colors. Each dancer took hold of one of the cords, then to the sound of music they crossed in and out, and gradually formed a symmetrical figure around the pole. When the cords became too short they undid the figure by reversing their steps.

Among the descendants of the Aztecs the dance is but little in vogue. However, in villages far removed from cities, it is not rare to see an Indian rise suddenly during the celebration of the mass, and begin to dance. The gravity with which he performs this action, and the sobriety of his steps atone, to a certain extent, for whatever unseemliness this fancy may have, considering that our views have robbed the dance of its ancient sacred character.

The theatre and the dance did not constitute the only amusements of the Mexicans. They had instituted public games to enliven certain solemnities; they also had private sports. In the first class must be placed the foot-races and the sham battles. These sports were useful, for besides the pleasure which they afforded the crowd, they gave the soldiers a chance to exercise their agility, and to inure themselves to the dangers they would have to face.

A pastime less useful but more celebrated was

the sport called by the Spaniards "volador," which means "a flyer." For this sport a very tall, strong, and straight tree was procured, and having been stripped of its bark was planted in the middle of a square. On its top a cylinder of wood was placed, from which hung four ropes, intended to hold up a square wooden frame. Between the cylinder and the frame four other ropes were attached, which were wound around the pole as many times as the flyers had, according to rule, to encircle it; they were then passed through holes made in the corners of the frame. Indians, dressed to represent eagles or other birds, climbed agilely to the cylinder. After dancing on its small platform to amuse the crowd, they took hold of the ropes, then spreading their wings they threw themselves into space. This impulse made the cylinder and the frame revolve together. The former in its motion unrolled the ropes to which the flyers were attached, and made them describe a larger curve at each revolution. During this descent an Indian, standing on the moving cylinder, waved a banner or beat a drum, undisturbed by his dangerous position. At the same time other Indians danced on the frame, and when the flyers were about to touch the ground, these bold acrobats slid down the ropes which held them, in such a way as to reach the ground at the same time with them. In their descent these men often daringly passed from one rope to another.

One of the important points of this sport consisted in exactly proportioning the length of the ropes to the height of the pole, in order that the flyers might touch the ground at the thirteenth turn, a number which represented quarter of the Aztec cycle. This dangerous pastime, prohibited by the Spaniards, is nevertheless one of the favorite amusements of the modern Aztecs; but the religious ideas that formerly dictated it are now forgotten.

Among their sports, the game of ball must be given a high place. According to Torquemada, the place where this diversion was indulged in was an immense quadrilateral, enclosed by walls thicker at their base than at their top, and lower at the ends of the field than at its sides. These walls, which were whitewashed, were smooth, and were crowned with battlements. Two idols, probably those of Omecatl, god of mirth, were brought at night and placed at the foot of certain small walls, with superstitious ceremonies.

The ball used was made of rubber, and had great elasticity. The contestants were divided into sides, each of which numbered two or three players; they removed all their clothes but their girdles. The rules of the game required that the ball, thrown from one end of the field, should strike the wall at the other, either at one throw or by bounding. But the players were allowed to touch it only with the wrist, the knee, or the elbow, under penalty of losing a point.

At this sport the people wagered ears of corn, clothes, and sometimes even their liberty; the wealthy, jewels of gold, silver, or feathers. In the middle of the enclosure stood two stones, like our mill-stones, with a hole in the centre a little larger than the ball. The player whose ball went through one of these holes — a rare feat — won not only the game, but the clothing of all the people present. This was also regarded as a brilliant action.

We can judge how popular this sport must have been among the peoples of Anahuac, by the tribute of balls which the cities paid the king. Tochtepec and Otatitlan sent as many as sixteen thousand to the royal treasury. At the present time the Indians are ignorant even of the name of this game which delighted their ancestors.

Another game, called "patolli," consisted in drawing upon a fine mat made of palm-leaves, a square crossed by two diagonal and two transverse lines. Large beans marked with points were thrown as dice, and according to the number thrown, the players removed small stones placed in the angles formed by the lines, or placed others in them. The person who first placed the stones in three rows won the game.

Bernal Diaz mentions a game with which Moteuczoma, during his captivity, amused himself in company with Cortez. This pastime, which according to him was called "toloque,"

consisted in throwing small golden balls at a plate of the same metal, used as a target. The person who hit the plate of gold five times won a jewel.

Among the Aztecs there were acrobats of extraordinary agility. For example, one of them lay on the ground, and raising his legs, held a beam balancing on his feet, then made it dance, and turn rapidly, without letting it fall. Sometimes two men placed themselves astride the ends of this beam, and followed its evolutions. Others rested a pole on their shoulder, and one of their companions, climbing to its top, balanced himself there.

CHAPTER XVII.

IDEOGRAPHIC PAINTINGS. — PAPER. — COLORS. — SIGNS. — NUMERATION. — SCULPTURE. — THE GOLDSMITH'S ART. — FEATHER MOSAICS. — ARCHITECTURE. — CONCLUSION.

THE Aztecs, much like the Egyptians, had painters, designers, and sculptors for historians, for they knew no writing but ideographic pictures. The Mayas were the first people in the New World who thought of preserving the memory of past facts, by recording them with pictures. This art, gradually perfected, came into general use among all the nations of Anahuac.

The most ancient Mexican paintings are little more than portraits of gods, of kings, of celebrated men, and reproductions of animals and plants. Afterwards these pictures represented memorable scenes or events.

Among these pictures there were some mythological paintings, — that is, consecrated to the mysteries of religion; and some of an historical character, recording past facts. Others were codes which contained civil laws or religious rites. Others were of a chronological, an astronomic, or an astrologic nature, showing the position of the stars, the phases of the moon, and eclipses.

Father Acosta relates that in the province of Yucatan, there were collections of pictures by the aid of which the Indians learned to recognize the planets, the division of time, the forms of animals and of plants, and even the antiquities of their country. These precious documents, like thousands of others, were burned by a too zealous priest, who saw in them only sources of error and of superstitions.

There were also topographical paintings, which served not only, as we have pointed out, to determine the boundaries of property, but to show the position of cities, the outline of the coasts, and the course of rivers. Cortez states, in his first letter to Charles V., that, when he wished to learn if there was a place of safety for his vessels in the Gulf of Mexico, Moteuczoma gave him a map in which the entire coast, from the port of Chalchiuhuecan, now called Vera Cruz, as far as the Goatzacoalco river, was indicated. Bernal Diaz states that Cortez, during his long and difficult journey in the province of Honduras, used a map which the lords of Goatzacoalco presented him, — a map which showed all the villages and small streams of the coast.

There were many painters in the Mexican empire, and paintings innumerable. If these documents had been collected and preserved, we should know the history of the peoples of Anahuac in detail. Unfortunately, the first missionaries, animated by a false zeal, took great care to

secure these manuscripts to destroy them. All those they could lay their hands on in Tezcoco, where the principal school of painting was situated, were piled up in the market-place and burned. The Aztec annals were thus reduced to ashes, and with them perished the memory of important facts.

Later, appreciating better the importance of these documents, the missionaries deplored what they had done, and endeavored to repair the evil by collecting the pictures which had escaped their search; but, although they were able to procure a certain number, the now mistrustful Indians carefully hid them. Nevertheless, some still exist; they are, however, very difficult of access to scholars who want to study them. Aubin and Pinart, fortunately for science, have been able to collect quite a number of them.

Generally, the paintings were executed on paper, on parchment made of deer-skins, or on fine cloths. Paper was obtained from various substances, but the most highly appreciated was made of agave-leaves, which were soaked for a long time and afterwards washed in a large quantity of water and polished. Paper was also made — but of an inferior quality — from palm-leaves, fine bark coated with gum, and lastly, from cotton. That called "cuauhamacatl" ("wood-paper") came from the "anacahuite," a tree of the *borago* family. Unfortunately, we do not now know to what processes the Aztecs had recourse, although

this industry was still in full activity a long time after the conquest, as is proved by the fact that the celebrated Hernandez speaks of the manufactories of the city of Tepextlan. The best Aztec paper was very much like our pasteboard, but much more pliant and much smoother; it was of a grayish-white, and sometimes brown color; it would not absorb ink. It was cut into leaves three feet wide and from fifteen to twenty long, which were rolled up like ancient papyrus, or folded like the leaves of screens.

The beautiful colors which the Aztec painters used were generally obtained from woods, leaves, and the flowers of plants, but sometimes from the mineral kingdom. For white they used either the stone called "chimaltizatl," which, when calcined, gave a product like fine plaster, or an earth very much like Spanish-white. An offensive earth, and the smoke of an aromatic pine supplied them with black. Sky-blue they obtained from the indigo-plant (*indigofera anil*); but their method of obtaining this color was very different from that in use to-day. They threw the leaves, one by one, into a vase filled with lukewarm water, then having stirred the liquid a long time, they let it rest. They afterward carefully emptied the water from the vase, dried the deposit obtained in the sun, and then heated it to harden it.

To obtain red they boiled the seeds of the annatto (*bixia orellana*); and cochineal gave them

scarlet. They obtained yellow from the stalks of a plant of the genus *cuscuta*, or they used yellow ochre. They used alum to fix their colors; and to give them more consistency they mixed them with the sticky juice of a species of wormwood called "xochipalli," or with oil obtained from the mucilaginous seeds of a kind of sage, — *salvia chia*.

The representations of mountains, buildings, rivers, plants, animals, and especially of men, in Aztec paintings, are generally wanting in proportion. The outlines are angular and stiff, and the eyes are always drawn as if the man or animal represented was looked at full in the face, even when the painting is a profile. These defects must not be imputed entirely to ignorance or want of skill on the part of the artists, but in a measure to the rapidity with which they painted, — a rapidity which greatly surprised the Spaniards. The Mexican painters at first thought only of representing objects, and contented themselves even with drawing them in silhouette, caring nothing for perfection of the lines. They were certainly ignorant of the laws of light and shade; some of their works, however, are as remarkable for the nature of their design as for the brilliancy of their coloring.

They used not only images of objects in their ideographic paintings, but also hieroglyphics and signs equivalent to letters. At first they designed material things, such as presented themselves to

their eyes, then gradually, to economize time, they drew only a part of the object, — enough for the initiated to recognize. For, just as we do not understand writing until we have learned to read, the Aztecs, to interpret the paintings, — which were nothing but a written language, — had to be first instructed in the art of drawing.

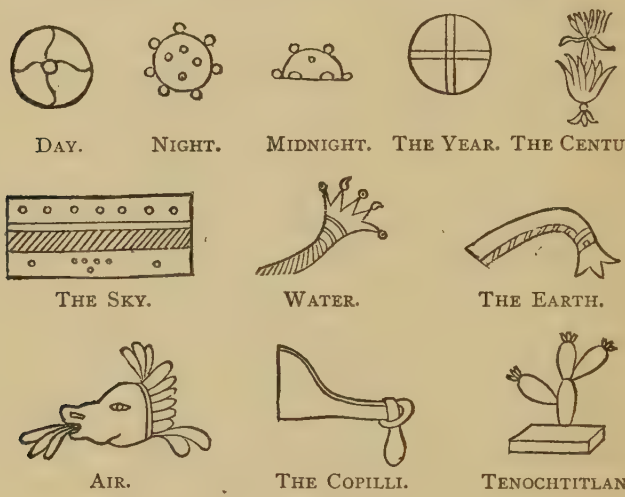


Fig. 17. — Hieroglyphics.

To represent immaterial things, the imitation of which would have been difficult, the painters used conventional signs. In order that the mechanism of this ideographic writing may be better understood, we give in figure 17 some characters taken from manuscripts to designate the year, the day, the night, the elements; also the symbol of royal authority, the "copilli," and that of Tenochtitlan, — a stone and a cactus.

For figures, one of the numerical signs was the dot (.) , which marked the units, and which was repeated either up to 20 or up to the figure 10, represented by a lozenge. The number 20 was represented by a flag, which, repeated five times, gave the number 100, which was marked by drawing quarter of the barbs of a feather. Half of the barbs was equivalent to 200, three fourths to 300, the entire feather to 400. Four hundred multiplied by the figure 20 gave 8,000, which had a purse (fig. 18) for its symbol. From sign to sign, always multiplied, one by another, hundreds of millions were reached.

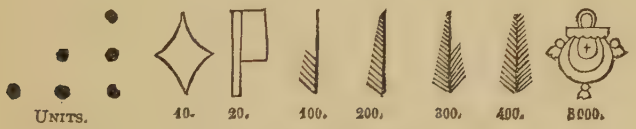


Fig. 18. — Numeration.

We know nothing concerning the processes employed by the Aztecs in the reform of their calendar. Although their paintings show that they knew the cause of eclipses, and that the position of certain constellations determined the date of their feasts, they teach us nothing concerning their process of computation.

To represent a special person, the painter drew a man, or more simply, a head, and placed above it a sign representing the name of the man he wished to designate. We have seen some examples in the chronology of the kings, and we

give here, according to the manuscripts, the kings Itzacoatl, Huitzilihuitl, and one of the forms given to Ahuitzotl (see fig. 14). When it was necessary to designate a province, a river, a mountain, or a city, the same artifice was employed.

The historic pictures of the Aztecs had different names. When they illustrated an isolated fact, or a longer or shorter period in the life of a sovereign or of a nation, they were called "tlacuiloli" or "tlacuiloliztli." When chronological they were called "cexiutlacuiloli." The Codex of Mendoza belongs to this class.

In the cexiutlacuiloli the date of the year was placed on the margin of the paper, and after it was traced the event the memory of which was to be preserved. There was no absolute rule for the order of the pictures; the artist could begin at any corner of the paper he chose. However, an order having been adopted he could not depart from it.

There was the same liberty in the arrangement of the signs. In some manuscripts the figures are placed in groups, in others in vertical lines, which must be read from top to bottom; in still others in horizontal lines. Generally, the heads face in the direction in which the manuscripts must be read. When they are turned towards each other it is intended to show that they are concerned in a common action.

It cannot be denied that such a writing is imperfect and confused, and that it often leads to ambiguity. Nevertheless, it is certainly in-

genious, and the efforts of the Aztec nation to preserve the memory of its past history are worthy of interest. It took the place of a knowledge of letters, which, considering the state of civilization, it would, doubtless, have acquired, if the continuance of the empire had not been suddenly terminated.

The Mexican paintings should be considered only as documents intended to help tradition. The past facts of their national history occupied the Aztecs so much that the professors of the seminaries and fathers of families ceaselessly talked to the young concerning them. They made the children learn by heart the speeches which the pictures could not record, and sing poems which celebrated the glory of their ancestors. These studies cleared away doubts, prevented the ambiguity which might spring from the reading of the pictures, and perpetuated the great deeds and the examples of virtue given by the heroes. At the same time they saved from oblivion the history of the gods, the religious rites, the laws, and ancient customs.

The peoples of Anahuac, in their infancy, perpetuated the memory of the past with the aid of little cords dyed various colors, and knotted in different ways. This singular mnemonic resort, which is preserved in Peru, and which is there called "quipos," — which we ourselves use, knotting our handkerchiefs, — was abandoned at an early date by the Mexicans, and scarcely any traces

of it are found at the present time. Boturini states that after the most careful search he could find but one of these strings, greatly damaged by time, in the village of Tlaxcala.

As soon as the Indians had learned the use of letters from the Spaniards, some of their number wrote histories of their country, either in their own language or in that of their conquerors. Many of these writings have been preserved in the libraries of Mexico, and those of Ixtlixochitl and Tezozomoc have been published in part.

The Aztecs were certainly more skilful in sculpture, in the art of working metals, and in the composition of mosaics of feathers than in painting; and they succeeded better in representing the features of heroes or the products of nature with wood, stone, gold, or silver than with the brush. The difficulties inherent in these labors probably incited them to greater application, or possibly the national taste stimulated their industrial genius in this direction.

Sculpture was known and practised by the Toltecs. Stone statues, works of the artists of this nation, — among others those of Tlaloc and those which adorned the two celebrated temples of Teotihuacan, — were preserved until the arrival of the Spaniards. The Aztecs had sculptors when they left their primitive fatherland, for we know that they carried with them a statue of Huitzilipochtli. But in this art they always remained inferior to their masters, the Toltecs.

The Mexican sculptors worked generally in stone or wood; sometimes, however, they used granite, jasper, and agate. Owing to their ignorance of iron, and consequently of steel, they were compelled to use implements made of hard stone; and they accomplished their work by wearing rather than by cutting. They needed all the constancy and patience under difficulties characteristic of the race to surmount the obstacles they met with, and not to grow enervated by the tedious processes they were compelled to practise. Nevertheless, in spite of the imperfection of the means, they produced remarkable works, and succeeded in giving their statues all the positions which the human body can assume.

They knew how to execute bas-reliefs and statues in clay, and to carve wood. The number of statues which exist in the empire can be estimated from that of the idols. But here again we must bewail the zeal of the missionaries who broke many of these works, regarded by them as images of the devil. The foundation of the first church which the Spaniards built in Mexico was composed, it is said, of fragments of statues; and the priests carried on such a conscientious war against these images that it is difficult to find one of them to-day.

A few years after the conquest of their country, the Aztec sculptors, finding no more employment in their art, busied themselves in carving, from bones or wood, ornaments for the altars of

churches, which everywhere took the place of temples. They succeeded admirably, and their works of this sort were soon preferred by the missionaries to those which came from Europe. They also began to make, with the aid of pieces of bamboo, crucifixes of natural size, the sorrowful expression of which was well rendered. It certainly was not from the Spaniards that these artists had learned their trade. Knowing how to carve, they utilized their skill, of which we here have a proof, by representing the God whose worship they were learning. They were in the habit of copying, but their taste guided them so surely that their works, noticed and sought after, deserved the honor of being sent to Spain.

Above the art of sculpture the Aztecs placed that of working the metals, especially gold and silver, which they collected from the beds of rivers, but which they also obtained from the ground. We might regard the number of the works which they executed with these materials as exaggerated, if, besides the affirmations of eye-witnesses, who agree in their judgments, many of these jewels had not been sent to Europe. Those which Cortez sent to Charles V. were greatly appreciated by the goldsmiths of Seville, who confessed their inability to imitate them. The Mexican artists reproduced all the objects of nature in rare perfection. They moulded, at a single casting, fishes whose scales were alternately of gold and of silver. Among their works are

mentioned a parrot shaking his head, his tongue, and his wings, and a monkey likewise articulated, armed with a spindle and spinning. They set precious stones with wonderful skill; and the soldiers of Cortez, so fond of gold, sometimes preferred their work to the precious metal. This art, which came from the Toltecs, who attribute its invention to Quetzacoatl, is entirely lost, as well as its productions, a specimen of which would be looked for in vain in the New World. From time to time the Indians, it is true, discover ancient jewels, — generally, however, of coarse workmanship. Unfortunately, either from superstition or from fear of being despoiled, they break them immediately.

The Aztecs used the hammer in working metals, but very unskilfully. Next to gold and silver, the metal they employed most profitably was copper, alloyed with tin, and the Spaniards boasted of their shields and pikes. The silversmiths of Mexico formed a large body; we have seen that they feasted the god Xipe, and considered him as their protector.

As a proof of the skill of the Aztec goldsmiths, whose old works had already become rare in his time — 1606 — Torquemada relates that having need of some gold buttons for a dalmatica, they endeavored to find a workman among the Spaniards in Mexico capable of making them. An Aztec offered himself, and working the gold in the manner followed by his ancestors, he gave

the buttons the shape of small gourds, so perfectly imitated that his work caused a sensation.

The Aztec art, *par excellence*, was that of making mosaics with the aid of fine feathers of birds. For this work there were not only in the palaces of the king, but also in almost all the houses, aviaries filled with richly colored birds, that were plucked once a year. The raw material for these mosaics was taken from the numerous *trochilus* family (humming-birds), — as much on account of the fineness of their feathers as on account of their varied shades. A mosaic was almost always the work of several workmen. Having decided upon the design, each of them began to work, and often an entire day was necessary for them to match and place a single feather. No imperfection in this work was tolerated; consequently it had to be altered ceaselessly. The workmen never touched the feathers, except with the aid of a soft substance, for fear of rumpling them; they fixed them on the linen by moistening them with the sticky juice of a plant. The work ended, it was polished with great care; and its smooth surface caused it to be often taken for a painting, — a mistake which the Spaniards made more than once.

This delicate art, which excited the wonder of Cortez, Diaz, Gomara, and Torquemada, is now completely forgotten. Of the specimens in the museums none are anterior to the sixteenth century.

The Indians, however, have not lost the art of making garlands of flowers and fruits, by arranging their colors in such a manner as to produce symmetrical designs, curious in their originality, and very picturesque in their effect. In the village of Tenejapa I once saw a small triumphal arch made of flowers. Nothing could be more pleasing than this ephemeral monument. It was composed of rosettes, lozenges, torsels, fantastic figures, designed, with the aid of the most brilliant wreaths, by an Indian artist free to follow his fancy. It needs the wealth of the tropic flora to produce these splendid ornaments of a day. The painter, — he deserved the name, — now contrasting his colors and now giving them a skilful gradation, always produced harmonious effects. I do not know which I admired the most, the designs, the flowers, or the art with which they were arranged. As if to render the sight more charming, swarms of butterflies hastened to light on the brilliant decoration, flying about, whirling around to return and alight on it again. At times it seemed as if the breeze would strip the wreaths of their leaves and strew the air with their dazzling petals. The Aztec, passionately fond of flowers, decorated the temples of his gods with the wreaths with which his descendants now trim the churches. It is difficult to believe, in the face of these delicate works, that they are the productions of hands accustomed to use the pick, and that so

much taste is concealed in skulls apparently so thick.

A people who exercised its industry in works of luxury or curiosity could not neglect those which concerned its comfort. Consequently architecture, one of the arts which necessity imposes on man as soon as he leaves the state of barbarism, was known to the peoples of Anahuac from the time of the Toltecs. The Chichimecs, the Alcolhuas, the Tlaxcaltecs, — in a word, all the nations who occupied the provinces, with the exception of the Otomites, — built houses at an early date; and when the Aztecs arrived in Anahuac they found it covered with large and beautiful cities.

They themselves knew how to build, and were accustomed to social life; for during the long peregrination which led them to the shores of Lake Tezcoco, they erected a number of edifices at the places where they stopped. Nevertheless, the monuments which are found on the banks of the Gila river, in Pimeria, and near Zacatecas, which have been for a long time attributed to the Aztecs, are not their works. These remains, like those of Mistec and of Yucatan are, as we have seen, the work of more ancient peoples.

During the wretched years which they passed on the islands of Lake Tezcoco, the Aztecs contented themselves with humble cabins, with walls of reeds and of mud. But when, owing to the products of their fisheries, they were able to

engage in commerce, they hastened to procure better materials. In proportion as their wealth increased, they attached more importance to their buildings, up to the time of the appearance of the Spaniards, who found much to admire, but, alas, much also to destroy.

The walls of the dwellings of the poor were made of bamboo and bricks dried in the sun, and sometimes of stones held together with clay. To cover their roofs the Aztecs used long weeds or agave-leaves placed one upon the other, like our tiles. One of the principal supports of these houses was often a tree of medium height, which, in addition to the shade it afforded, lessened the cost of construction. These houses had but one room, in which was the fireplace, the furniture, the utensils, and in which the family and domestic animals lived together. If the proprietor was in comfortable circumstances, two or three rooms, an oratory, a "temascalli," and a granary were added to the house.

The dwellings of the nobles and of the wealthy people were built of stone. They had two stories, with the rooms well arranged; and the roof, made of timber-work, was flat and served for a terrace. The walls, whitened and carefully polished, shone in such a manner that the first Spaniards who arrived before Mexico believed they were of silver. The foundation of these houses was of masonry; sometimes they were crowned with battlements or towers. Generally

they had a garden, and a pond supplied with running water.

The principal dwellings of Mexico had two entrances, one opening on the street, the other on the canal. These openings were without doors; the Mexicans regarded themselves as sufficiently protected against thieves by the severity of their laws. But to escape the curiosity of passers-by they covered these openings with curtains, to which they suspended an object which, sounding when they were raised, announced the presence of a visitor. When necessity, politeness, or the degree of kindred did not make it necessary to ask the person to come in, he was received simply on the threshold. It was not permitted to enter a house without the consent of the proprietor.

The Aztecs were familiar with the use of the arch, as is proved by their paintings, and better still by their baths, and the ruins of the palace of Tezcoco. They ornamented their edifices with cornices, and they frequently surrounded their doors with arabesque work. On the façade of some of the palaces we see a crawling serpent in the act of biting its tail, after having surrounded all the windows of the building with its coils. The walls which the Mexican masons built were straight and perpendicular, but we do not know what tools and what methods they used. It is believed that in their important constructions they supplied the use of scaffolding by heaping up earth by the side of the walls they were

building. The Mistecs certainly employed this artifice; however, there is nothing to prove that it was used by the Mexicans.

The columns, with which they sustained their buildings were cylindrical, or square, without bases and without capitals. They always cut them from a single block, and ornamented them with bas-reliefs. In Mexico, owing to the soft character of the ground, piles of cedar were used as foundations for their edifices. Generally they borrowed the timbers for their roofs from the same family of trees, and the columns with the aid of which they supported them were of stone in the ordinary houses, and of alabaster or marble in the palaces. Until the reign of Ahuitzotl they used common stones; but having discovered near the lake quarries of a hard, porous, light substance, easily held together by mortar, they employed it exclusively. This stone, called "tetzontli" (porous amygdaloid), is still used by the modern Mexican architects. The pavement of the temples and palaces was composed of large slabs of different colored marbles.

Although Aztec architecture may not have given birth to wonders such as placed Europe in the first rank, the Spaniards certainly were so surprised by the beauty of the palaces of Mexico that Cortez, in his letters to Charles V., does not find expressions strong enough to praise them. "The king, Moteuczoma," he wrote, "owns in Mexico such vast and wonderful mansions that I

cannot give a better idea of them than by saying that their equals are not found in Spain." The anonymous Conqueror shows the same admiration in his interesting work, as well as Bernal Diaz del Castillo in his history.

The Mexicans built many aqueducts for the convenience of the inhabitants of their cities. Those which brought the waters of Chapultepec to the capital, a distance of two miles, were of stone, and measured five feet in height and two feet in width. The water was brought to the gates of the city, and from there was taken to supply the fountains and ponds. There were two aqueducts, but only one was used at a time, for they were frequently cleaned in order that the water might always reach the city pure. At Tecutzinco, a country residence of the kings of Tezcoco, the aqueduct which carried the water to the palace may still be seen.

The double aqueduct of Chapultepec followed a route which, like the causeways built over the lake, is an irrefutable proof of the industry of the Mexicans. But the intelligence and knowledge of their architects shines most brilliantly in the city of Mexico, for they were compelled to make the land on which they were to build, by connecting many islands. Besides this task, they had to build dikes and walls in different parts of the valley, to protect the city from the inundations which threatened to destroy the city every year.

Some writers claim that the Aztecs did not know the use of lime; this assertion is disproved by their paintings, by the records, still existing, of the tributes which the provinces were required to pay, and better still, by a simple glance at the edifices they built, the ruins of which we still admire.

But I have reached the end of my task. What I have related in regard to the history, the religion, the government, the industries, and the customs of the Aztecs, is, I believe, all that is known in regard to this people whom Cortez reduced to a servitude which, morally, still exists. The creoles, sons of the Spaniards and the Aztecs, scorn the once haughty race from which they have in part descended. The creoles have taken from them the name of Mexicans, leaving them the name of Indians, which they use as a term of reproach. And, nevertheless, of the ten millions of men who to-day people Mexico, about two thirds belong to these Nahuas, whom I have tried to revive, and who now seem to be awakening.

MAP OF THE VALLEY OF ANAHUAC.

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